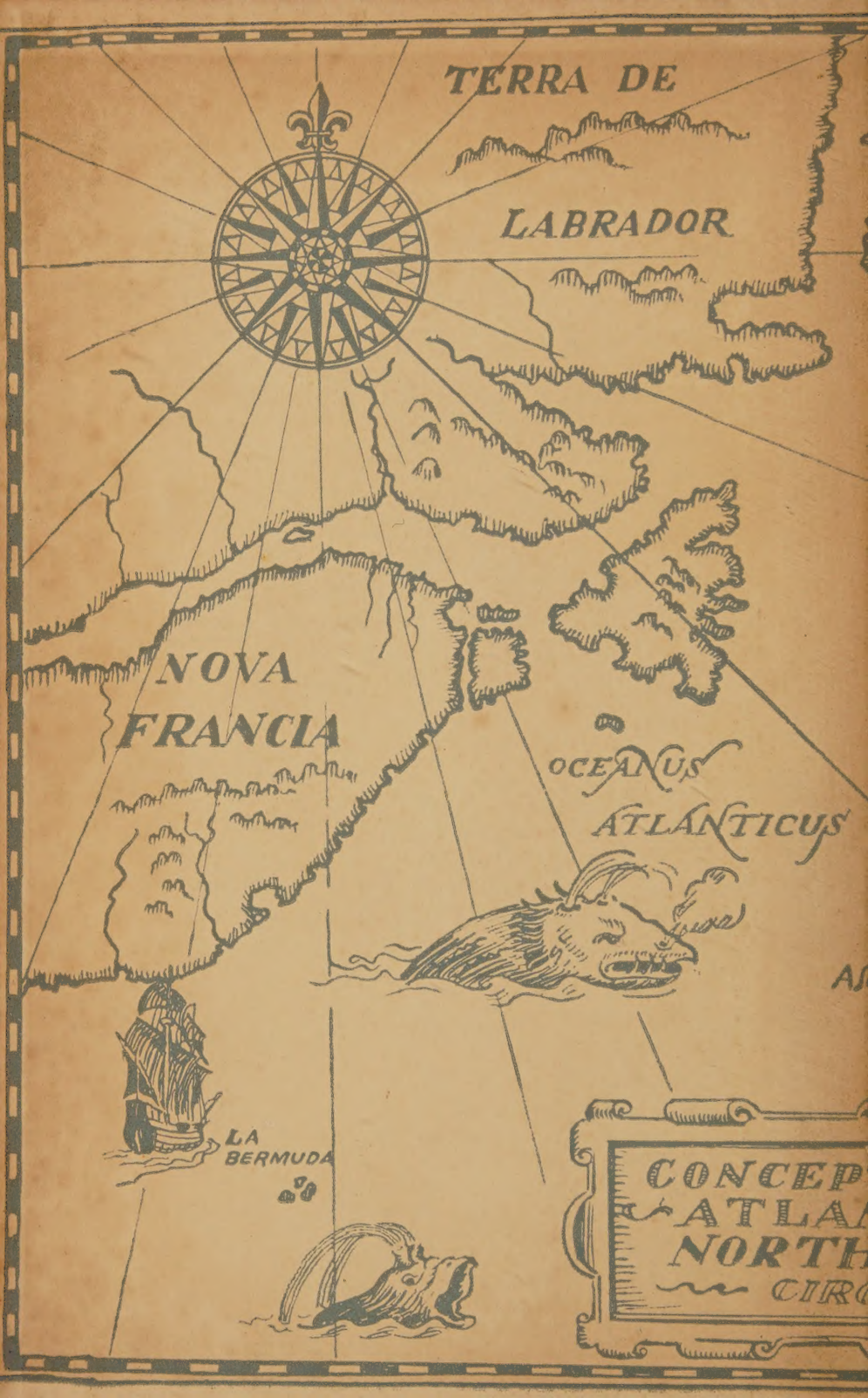
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THE ATLANTIC

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THE ATLANTIC

By
STANLEY ROGERS
Illustrated by the Author

New York
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Publishers

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TO

F. C. R.

PREFACE

THE Atlantic, known to sailors as the Western Ocean, has been the stage on which many of the most important events in history have been played.

As in a confused dream I see, against a background of grey-green water, the Vikings in their dragon-stemmed, red-sailed *snekkas*; the historic caravels of Columbus; little puffs of smoke from the popguns of the *Golden Hind*; the scurvy-stricken ships of Magellan, Frobisher, Cartier, Hudson, and Raleigh; the swarthy rovers of the Main; the fat treasure-galleons rolling home to Spain; the brave little *Mayflower*; the privateersmen; the fighting sloops of 1812; the swift clippers bowling along under a cloud of white canvas; and, lastly, the huge shapes of modern liners silhouetted against the sky.

Histories have been written of peoples, of religions, and of countries, so why not the history of an ocean? The subject is not lacking either in material or in interest. But to suggest that this book is a history of the Atlantic would be misleading, for it has neither beginning nor end, essential conditions in a true history. This has no sequence. I jump with the facility of a pair of thousand-league boots from north to south, or from east to west, and bridge five centuries in a paragraph. But no matter. I prefer that this be regarded rather as an entertainment than as a text-book.

S. R. H. R.

LIMEHOUSE
1930

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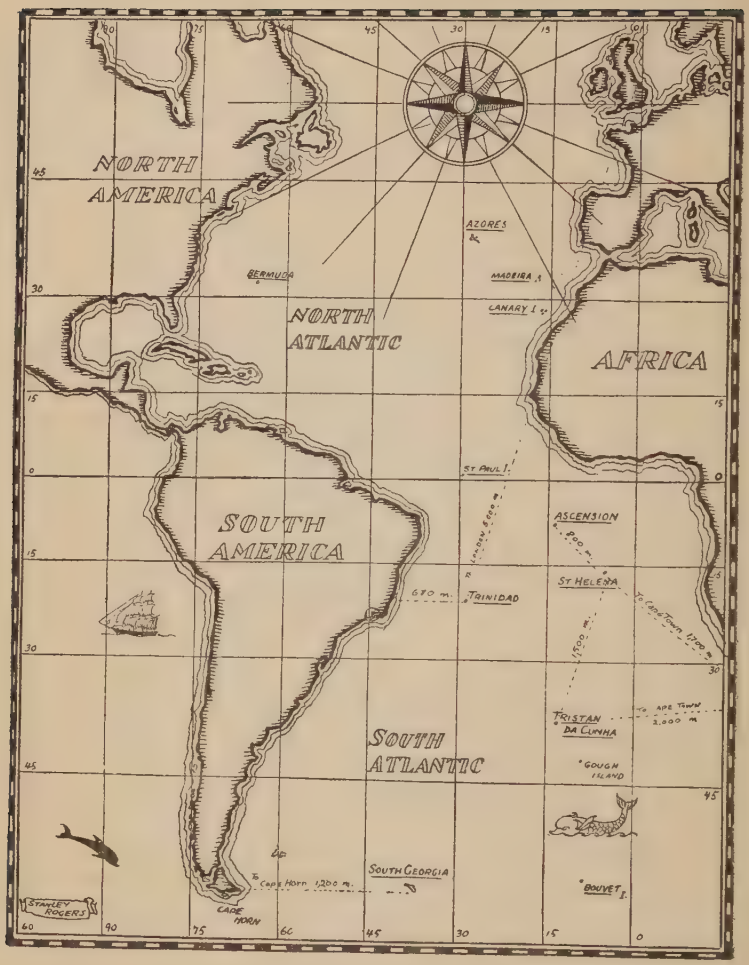
THE ATLANTIC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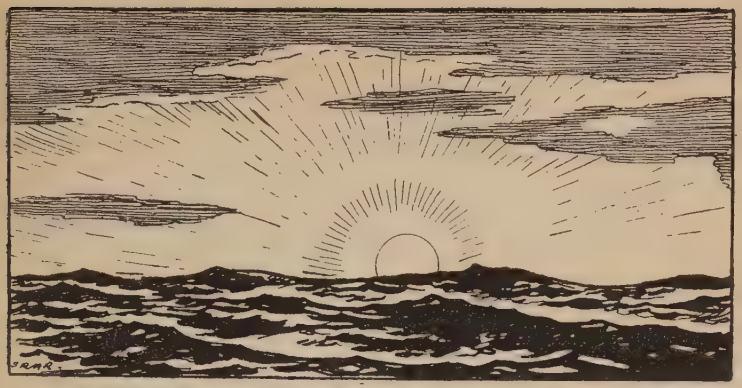


CHAPTER I

The Atlantic

Only those who have crossed the Atlantic can appreciate the immensity of this expanse of water, which some landsman once dubbed the Herring-pond. Even the modern liner which rushes across at thirty miles an hour (a good speed for a motor-car), never stopping day or night, takes five days to do the passage. As the modern voyager comes on deck each morning and sees nothing but a lonely wilderness of water the vastness of the Atlantic is brought home to him. How much more, then, must earlier voyagers have felt the great distances of the ocean when they took weeks, even months, to make a passage from land to land! No wonder Columbus's scurvy-ridden and superstitious crew grew mutinous, or that the *Mayflower's* company got on to their knees that winter's day in 1620 and thanked God for a safe crossing!

The present writer has made the passage many times, but even the speed of a modern liner has not taken away from him that feeling of appalling distances. Actually, fast steamships have brought the Old and New Worlds close together, if we count distance by time and not by space; but even Charles Lindbergh must have been impressed by

the immensity of the world of green water over which he flew.

Without being the largest of the Seven Seas, the Atlantic is undoubtedly the most impressive of them all, because of its physical self alone, apart from its dominant place in the world's history. Like the Pacific, it is bordered by four continents, and extends from the Arctic to the Antarctic, and it has a reputation for being truculent which is not unjustified, for not even in mid-summer can one be sure of a gentle crossing.

Perhaps the most remarkable feature about the Atlantic is that current of comparatively warm water which flows from the Gulf of Mexico up the Eastern American seaboard, and spreads fanwise across the ocean, to the salvation of the British Isles. Had there been no Gulf Stream to temper the cold moat surrounding our island home, Shakespeare could not have written:

> This other Eden, demi-paradise, . . .
> This precious stone set in the silver sea.

When one looks, on a chart of the Atlantic, at the swirling lines indicating ocean currents one imagines swiftly moving streams of water rushing in a grand cycle like some tremendous eddy, but such is not the case. The Gulf Stream, for example, moves slowly, almost sluggishly, with a rate of travel of no more than forty miles a day. As it flows northward it does not touch the coast of the United States, and the intervening strip of water is known as the 'cold wall.' Labrador does not share the benefits of this friendly stream, since the icy currents come down from the north to cool her rugged coasts. Approaching the eastern side of the Atlantic, the stream spreads out in the latitude of Spain, where it divides into two; one stream flows southward along the north-west coast of Africa, while the other arm passes northward to the west of the British

Isles. Here we leave it, for if we tried to follow all the twists and ramifications of this current, we should find ourselves travelling all over the hydrosphere. The course of the Gulf Stream, like the courses of all other ocean currents, is influenced by the contour of the land, the meeting with other streams, and other causes.

Just as the waters of the ocean have a constant circulation,

so have the airs above it. The circulation of the winds over the Atlantic has in certain large areas a definite, known direction, as in the case of the trade winds. Those constant breezes blow roughly north and south of the equator, and always in the same direction. They are known as the North-east and South-east Trades, and obviously they were a great boon to sailing-ships, which could depend upon them in going westward. But this very constancy of the trades was a source of anxiety to the ignorant medieval sailors, for they argued that the Evil

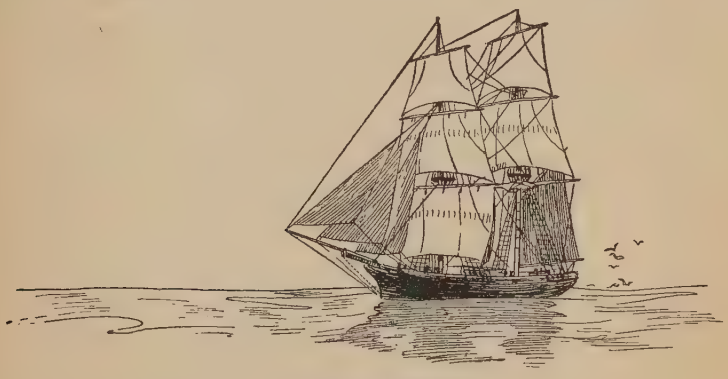
One had a hand in the making of these westward-blowing breezes. He would lure the ships so far to the west that they could never return against the head winds they would encounter on the return passage.

Columbus had to contend with this trouble, for his crew argued that this fair wind was sent by the devil to drive them to destruction. But once Columbus had proved the existence of the rumoured land in the West his followers

were quick enough to take advantage of the trades to make their westing. The Spaniards were the first on the spot, and the region of the trade winds was known as the Golfo de las Damas (the 'Ladies' Sea'), from the gentle nature of these airs, but later, when the less romantic English seamen sailed to the west, and discovered the advantage of having such a dependable wind for a speedy passage with their cargoes of trade goods, they coined the name 'trade winds,' a title we have stuck to ever since. Even the French employ a similar term in their *vents de commerce*.

A condition opposite to the trades exists in the Doldrums,

just north of the equator, a wedge-shaped area famous for its absence of wind. A captain of a sailing-ship who knew his business took care that his ship did not get into this fatal area. Sailing-ships have drifted into the Doldrums and remained there until every member of the crew has died of thirst and starvation. Months, even years, later they have been found, their sails rotten, their hulls covered with sea growths, and their crews fleshless skeletons. The Doldrums is the Sahara of the Atlantic. Vessels so un-



IN THE DOLDRUMS

fortunate as to get into this region lay becalmed on an oily sea perhaps for months, their decks blistering in the sun or being deluged with heavy tropical rains. Many a ship has buried half her crew before she drifted out of this deadly calm. Thirst, famine, pestilence, and madness overcame crews of the early sea-venturers who unwarily got into the Doldrums and had not the luck to edge out of them again quickly.

An area with a bad name among the superstitious seamen of former days, though quite harmless, is the Sargasso Sea, the Mar de Sargaco, or Sea of Seaweed, of the Spanish explorers. The course of the Gulf Stream, as has been said, divides into two branches as it approaches Europe, the southern current swirling down the west coast of Africa

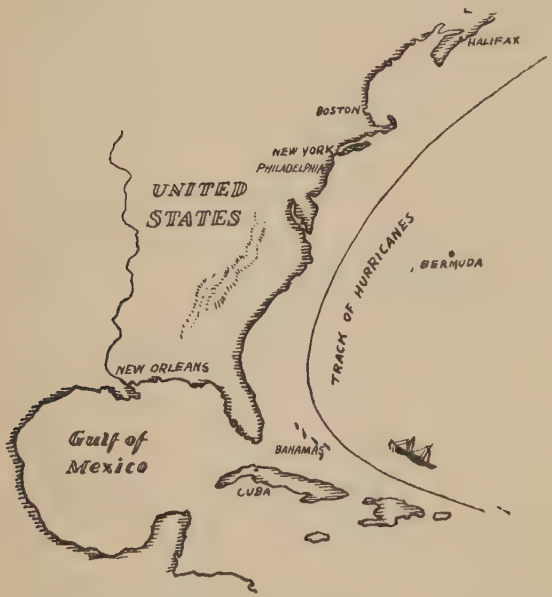
and meeting on its way the equatorial drift, which sets up a vast whirl into the centre of which come floating the flotsam and jetsam of the sea—driftwood, wreckage, trees, and smaller *débris*. It is in the area where this occurs that the Sargasso Sea is found. Floating on the surface, with its tendrils and roots suspended to depths of eighty fathoms, is a living plant regarded as seaweed, but resembling, as much as anything, duckweed. In places it grows thinly; in other places so dense is it that small sailing-ships found difficulty in ploughing through it.

There is a good deal of guesswork over the meaning of the different terms used in referring to Atlantic storms. The words 'tornado,' 'cyclone,' 'hurricane,' really refer to the same thing, though the first two are perhaps more frequently used on land. A hurricane is a whirling wind spinning at something like a hundred miles an hour, though the storm will be moving forward at the comparatively gentle rate of ten or twenty miles an hour. But while a vessel, especially if it be a steamer, has a good chance of avoiding the slowly advancing whirlwind, it has small chance of escaping serious damage if it is caught in the spinning monster. According to the Beaufort scale, which is a system of tabulating wind-velocity by numbers from 0 to 12,[1] the lowest hurricane speed is seventy-seven miles per hour. Hurricanes dissipate themselves, losing their violence by gradually expanding fanwise, the wind getting slower until it disappears like the flame of an extinguished candle. The haunts of hurricanes are in the West Indies, where they sweep over the low islands, levelling the palm-trees and the thatched huts of the natives, and sometimes raising a sea that will carry a ship a mile inland. The track of the hurricanes starts to the south-east of Haiti, and runs up past the Bahamas and

[1] 0 = calm; 4–5 = moderate wind; 6–7 = strong wind; 10–11 = storm; 12 = hurricane.

northward between Bermuda and the American seaboard past Nova Scotia.

A wind of ill-repute is the pampero, which raises a nasty sea off the coast of South America. It is really a land wind blowing from the pampas, the plains of the Argentine, but with such violence that ships several hundred miles out at sea feel its strength. The fury of a

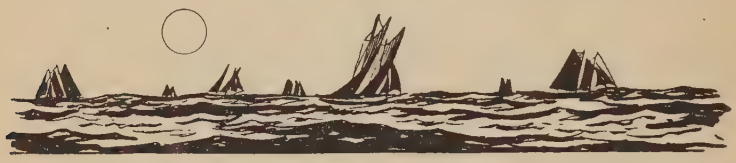


pampero has been felt so far away as Trinidad Island, 700 miles out in the Atlantic east of Rio.

Another thing altogether is the equinoctial gales, a bogey that haunts the souls of all timid or seasick Atlantic travellers. Actually these gales are a popular myth which has no foundation in fact. How the legend got so firmly established is a mystery, for observations taken over a long period of years show that during the latter days of March and September, the period of the Equinoxes, there were fewer gales on the Atlantic than during other periods. Yet

I have seen Atlantic passengers look sick at mention of the dreaded name. Though they are more mythical than real, the idea of their existence is so persistent that meteorologists and others who write serious works on the weather and storms have to give some attention to a phenomenon that does not exist.

A prominent feature of the Atlantic are the Grand Banks of Newfoundland, a great submarine tableland rising from the ocean floor to within as little as fifteen fathoms from the surface. Around the Banks the ocean in places reaches a depth of five miles, but the water on the Banks is so



shallow that icebergs frequently run aground there. The Grand Banks begin roughly fifty miles south of Cape Race, Newfoundland, and extend out into the Atlantic in a south-easterly direction for 300 miles, and are believed to have once been part of the North American continent. Owing to the icy currents from the Arctic, the water here is always cold.

Here is the finest fishing-ground in the world, and, being beyond territorial waters, it is, so to speak, no-man's land, and therefore free to all comers. Hence fishing fleets annually sail from Europe to get their share of the silver harvest of cod. For cod is the principal yield of these waters. Hundreds of thousands of large cod are caught each year, the supply increasing rather than otherwise. Since a single cod's roe may contain 6,000,000 eggs, this bountiful supply of fish is not to be wondered at. During the fishing season as many as 75,000 fishing vessels may be there at one time. The French fleet from

Stanley Rogers

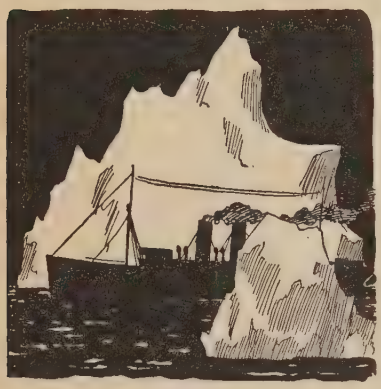
Brittany is blessed by the local priests before it begins the passage across the Atlantic, and this religious ceremony for the fishing fleet is one of the chief events of the year. Dutchmen from Holland, Frenchmen from the islands of Miquelon and St Pierre near by, and Canadians from Halifax and St John's bring their smacks to the Banks, and above all there are the men from New England, with their wonderful Gloucester schooners, the fastest sailing fishing vessels in the world. With two masts, a large sail area, and hulls with the saucer lines of a cup-challenger, they are built to race home to market with their holds full of fish, for the first-comers get the best prices. The fishing fleet of the Grand Banks is composed of every type and rig of small craft from 50 to 250 tons burden—cutters, schooners, yawls, ketches, and barquentines.

The method of fishing varies, but much of it is done by hand-line from the little dories that row away with one or two men from the parent vessel and remain away perhaps all day—unless a fog comes down over the sea, when they must get back to the schooner before she is hidden from view. Many fishermen are lost through being overtaken by the fog. The purpose of the dories, of which each schooner carries a number, is, of course, to enable the men to spread out over as much fishing-ground as possible. It was in a small boat of this type that William and Walter Andrews crossed the Atlantic during the seventies of the last century.

Another method of fishing is by the gill-net, which is suspended in the sea from glass balls, which have the virtue of being nearly invisible. The cod swimming into the thin meshes of the net are held by their gills until it is heavy with them. Mackerel and other fish are caught in quantities on the Banks, but it is the cod who is the king of these fishing-grounds.

Most passengers on the liners which pass in the vicinity

of the Grand Banks at certain times of the year are familiar with the ghostly shapes of icebergs showing through the mist over the sea, or perhaps glistening white in the cold sunlight of a clear day. These icebergs, like many lovely things, are charged with danger. The *Titanic* was destroyed by an iceberg, and many another good ship has gone to the bottom from the same cause. So great is the peril of ice to the North Atlantic traffic that the United States Government keeps two stout little ships busy hunting down and destroying bergs that have come too far south. A wireless message informs those in charge at the Hydrographic Office at Washington, D.C., that icebergs have been sighted at such and such a position in the traffic lane, and the cutters are sent out to remove the menace if possible. The method varies according to the size of the berg. Trinitrotoluene, the famous explosive employed in the Great War, was once used, and gun-fire has been tried, but neither of these methods is so effective as the employment of thermite, a mixture of iron oxide and aluminium filings. This when fired generates enormous heat (some 5000° Fahr.), and the resulting explosion splits the ice asunder, or, in the case of a small 'growler,' it is simply dissipated. It is not improbable that when science perfects some ice-destroying rays, or Governments keep a more adequate fleet to deal with them as they drift into the prohibited area, the menace of the ice will have become a legend. At present the means do not exist really to cope with the iceberg problem. On one occasion the crew of the patrol cutter *Tampa* saw and measured a



ICE!

berg 1700 feet long and 65 feet high, while a shorter but loftier berg measured 250 feet high. As the greater part of the ice is below the surface, one can judge of the enormous size of a berg. On the Grand Banks one sometimes witnesses the strange sight of a number of bergs slowly spinning round in a giant circle like a phantom merry-go-round. This phenomenon is due to the bergs getting into an ocean eddy caused by a cold current from the north meeting a warmer current from the south. It is commonly thought that for every ten feet of iceberg showing above the sea ninety feet are below, but that is not strictly true. Actually it is nine-tenths of the total *weight* of the ice which is below the surface; but a large, flat berg may have a pinnacle rising fifty feet, while its actual depth below the surface may be less than that.

In the third week of April 1929 the newspapers contained accounts of the narrow escape of an Atlantic liner [1] off Newfoundland steaming through a field of giant icebergs. The bergs gradually closed around her as if drawn by some capillary attraction, and the passengers had an experience they will never forget. According to eyewitnesses, bergs as big as mountains were seen colliding in the darkness, the impact bringing down enormous fragments the size of skyscrapers. The captain described one iceberg as being as large as Hyde Park and hundreds of feet high, and said that the crashing, splitting, rending reports of the bergs were deafening. The ocean was covered with icebergs of all sizes as far as he could see. Then such a dense fog descended that the captain wisely stopped his ship. Somewhere in this neighbourhood is the grave of the *Titanic*, and many of the passengers remained on deck all night, peering anxiously into the gloom. The ship was in actual danger of being crushed

[1] The *Pennland* (16,322 tons; Captain V. L. Making).

during the night, but at daylight she steamed in a zigzag course until clear of the peril.

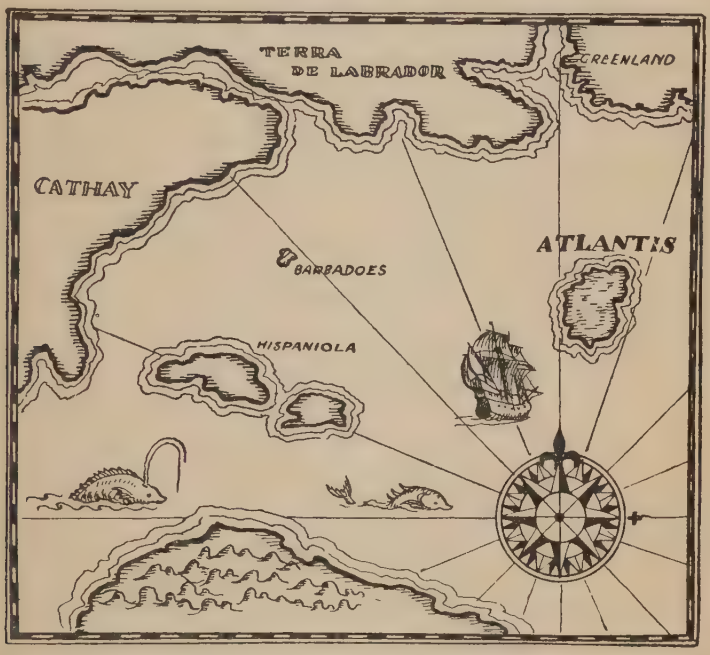
Many books have been written on the history or mythology of the lost continent of Atlantis. Since I have touched on the subject in a previous book,[1] I would hesitate to repeat the story of Atlantis here were it not that the history of the Atlantic would be incomplete without it.

Atlantis was a land of honey, a Utopia, an earthly paradise where love brought happiness instead of strife, where greed and lust did not exist, where wars were unknown, yet where women were lovely and men were men. Atlantis has been at different times identified with the mythical Fortunate Islands, the Isles of the Blest, and the Hesperides, and was supposed to lie well out in the Atlantic west of the Pillars of Hercules. That being so, it does not take much imagination to connect Atlantis with either the Azores or the Canaries. The world was much larger to the ancients than it is to us, and what to us is an island might conceivably be a continent to them. The early voyagers sometimes thought they had landed on a continent when they had merely found another island, as witness Columbus, even so late as 1492, landing on a small West Indian island and concluding he had reached the mainland of India.

Whatever we may think about Atlantis, the historians of the past took it seriously. No less a mind than Plato wrote of Atlantis in some detail, even describing its location. I am all on the side of the romantics who would have it that Atlantis existed, but we must admit that the arguments in favour are not very strong. Is the story of Atlantis preposterous? Let us examine the case for the romantics. It is a well-known fact that submarine upheavals have thrown up islands, and by the reverse process engulfed

[1] *Ships and Sailors* (Harrap).

them in the sea. The legend of the lost continent has persisted since the beginning of history, and what proof is there that a great submarine cataclysm, a stupendous movement of the Atlantic bed, wiping out this island continent did not occur? Then we have to account for the strange migration of the lemmings, those small animals



of the rodent family which, obeying some primal instinct, will swim from the European coast out into the Atlantic toward the west until they perish from exhaustion. It suggests that in past ages land existed where the sea is now. And, further, birds in great numbers annually fly westward, to hover over a great part of the Atlantic as if bewildered until they fall into the sea too exhausted to return.

Why try to disprove the theory? Why bother? Atlantis may not have existed, but it has provided a pretty theme

for poets and historians, and has harmed no one. I am grateful to it, legend or not, for it gives me an excuse to draw an imaginary map.

A natural phenomenon of the Atlantic, and, indeed, of all oceans, which excites the wonder of passengers on liners is the sight we call 'phosphorescence of the sea.' It is produced by millions upon millions of floating animalcules, and as the ship ploughs through the water her forefoot throws up a bow wave that looks like some cold, liquid flame. The spectacle is impressive, especially when the phenomenon is at its best. Then the sea becomes so luminous that the very stars are dimmed to the eye. The ship seems to be sailing through an ocean of fire, and in bad weather the foam from the breaking seas is charged with a brilliant light. The effect varies with the conditions. Sometimes the sea appears to be full of shooting streaks of light; at other times to glow all over with an uncanny luminosity. Where waves break on rocky shores the effect of phosphorescence is as if the coast was girt by a ring of fire—always with a cold flame like the pale silver of the moon.

A warm summer night on the Atlantic when the sea is phosphorescent is a romantic place for lovers. They lean over the rail to watch the darting points of light, their own faces perhaps lit up by the glow. And if romance does not entirely usurp all other interests they, like their more mundane fellow-passengers, find an absorbing interest in watching this beautiful and impressive phenomenon. Which reminds us what a world (or should it be sea?) of interest there is to divert the idle travellers on the Atlantic. Some are bored to death; they see nothing but a flat waste of water, and survive the ennui of the passage by eating, drinking, and playing cards in the smoking-room. It is the old precept exemplified again. You get out of life what you put into it. If you bring a capacity

for interest with you on an ocean voyage you will find it interesting. Some people look at the ocean and see nothing but a lot of water; others watch the sea and make thrilling discoveries.

Half-way between the ship and the horizon an arched black mass appears for a few seconds above the sea. It reappears perhaps a minute later, and above it floats a small plume of vapour. It is a whale, and if you are lucky you will see it 'breach' much closer to the ship, or you may see several of these animals 'making a passage,' as whalemen would say. Porpoises are common on the Atlantic, especially when your ship is nearing land. They have a joyful way of travelling through the water, half leaping, half rolling. They gambol like lambs in the springtime, and seem to play dangerously close to the bows of the steamer. I have seen following a ship another creature less pleasant to look upon than the porpoise. Sharks are not common in the North Atlantic, but once, when making a summer-time passage from New York, I saw, with other travellers, the sinister black, triangular dorsal fin of a shark following our vessel. The beast kept about fifty yards astern and well in our foaming wake. An enormous amount of waste food is dumped overboard every day from a liner, and this lone tiger of the sea had no doubt been attracted by the food the pantrymen had been throwing over. This same waste food attracts thousands of seagulls, which, as one nears land, string out behind, as though they were attached to the ship like the tail of a kite.

The observant Atlantic traveller will derive a noble pleasure from watching the sun rise. It is worth getting up for. At that hour one has the world to oneself. It is the hour for contemplation, and the æsthetic joy of beholding the sun beginning to rise from the rim of the sea is something quite beyond the power of describing. For a while one forgets the insistent presence of one's fellow-passengers. The harsh accents, the boring conversations, the vulgarity, the ignorance, and fussy importance of the wealthy Philistine who bets on the day's run, the pampered lady who raises hell if her bath water is a degree too hot or too cold, all are forgotten in the hour after dawn when the decks are deserted by all but the few, the real connoisseurs of life who prefer the eternal to the ephemeral.

CHAPTER II

The First Across

THE Atlantic has been the stage for many an event which has changed the course of history, but none can compare in importance with a certain happening which took place in the year 1492. On Friday, August 3 of that year three small ships stood out from the harbour of Palos, which is near Cadiz, with their bows pointing to the west. This tiny fleet had been got together only after enormous difficulties, for it was bound on a dangerous quest which most men would have nothing to do with. Cristoforo Colombo, to give the leader of this little expedition his correct name, set out to achieve three things: to prove his theory that the world was spherical, to find the Indies of Marco Polo by sailing west, and, finally, to bring back some of the gold from that country to fill the coffers of Ferdinand and Isabella of Spain. That Columbus failed to find either the Grand Khan's country or the gold does not matter, since the greater ambition, his desire to prove that the world was round, was realized to the full. This epoch-making voyage spiked the guns of his scoffers, and killed for ever the superstition and ignorance that had hitherto hampered any advance in the art of navigation. Columbus made his discovery when Europe was just emerging from the Dark Ages, and the great navigator's successful return to Spain contributed enormously to the

light that was spreading over Europe—the Renaissance of learning.

But it is not the results of this event which concern us so much as the actual expedition itself. Here you had three small ships, the largest being of not more than 100 tons and no larger than ninety feet long and twenty feet wide, and this the only one completely decked over. The names of this historic trinity, *Santa Maria*, *Niña*, and *Pinta*, have

become commonplace through familiarity, but it is not generally known that the *Pinta* was little more than a sort of gondola, undecked and open to the skies. She was rigged with those horn-shaped sails so common in Mediterranean waters, the lateen rig of the felucca and the Arab dhow. Little wonder that before the Canaries [1] were reached two sailors of the *Pinta*, Gomez Rascon and Christopher Quintero, tried to cripple their vessel by damaging the rudder, hoping thus to force their captain, Martin Alonzo Pinzon, to return to Spain! The attempt failed, however, and the three ships continued on their voyage into the unknown.

[1] Already known to navigators.

Now Columbus had a trusty companion in one Las Casas. The latter kept a detailed log of the passage, and from this journal we can very accurately estimate the character of the leader, and also get a clear picture of the events of the voyage.

Columbus, like most great men, combined in his make-up the traits that go to make a leader; but the two qualities he possessed to the greatest degree were faith in himself and tact in dealing with his superstitious crew. To allay the fears of the malcontents he kept two logs of the day's run, one the true one for himself, the other a false one understating the number of leagues sailed. For he rightly reasoned that had they known the actual distance they were from home they would have mutinied through sheer funk.

Let us travel in the *Santa Maria*, and peep at some of the entries in Las Casas' log.

Grand Canary was reached on Sunday, August 12, a week after leaving Spain, and here they tried putting square sails on to the *Pinta* while the damaged rudder was being repaired. On Thursday, September 6, the squadron left the islands and shaped a course for the west—the voyage had now begun in earnest. On September 10 the squadron made sixty leagues of westing, but the Admiral[1] gave the distance to the crew as forty-eight leagues. On September 14 a water-wagtail was seen, a bird which greatly heartened the men, who believed that such creatures are never found beyond twenty-five leagues from land. The next few days were marked by fine weather which Columbus compared with what he had experienced in Andalusia in April. Hereabouts they passed through a great area of floating weed which was probably the Sargasso Sea, as it later came to be called.

On September 18 fifty-five leagues were sailed, though the crews were told that the distance made was forty-eight.

[1] Ferdinand and Isabella gave Columbus the title of High Admiral of the Sea.

Occasionally birds were seen, and on the 19th a pelican perched in the rigging of the *Santa Maria*. The next day two more pelicans came on board, and much floating weed was noticed. Columbus announced that land must be near, though, as a matter of fact, they were in the middle of

the Atlantic at this time. On September 22 head winds were met, a fact which greatly cheered the crews, as they had been afraid that they would never get back to Spain with the prevailing winds coming from the east. More birds were seen.

On September 25 Martin Alonzo Pinzon signalled that he had seen land on the western horizon, at which every one went on their knees and repeated " Gloria in excelsis

Deo." The course was altered from west to south-west in the direction of the supposed land. All that night and into the next day they sailed toward the land, which melted into low-lying clouds as the ships proceeded. A great sense of disappointment, which must have required all the Admiral's adroitness to mollify, settled on the crew. Various kinds of birds continued to be seen, some of them obviously tropical.

By October 1 707 leagues' westing had been made, though to the crew it was given out as 584. Each day *Paternosters* and *Ave Marias* were said in gratitude for the continued fine weather. In the earlier stages of the passage rough seas had been met, but during these latter days the sea had been gentle, even smooth, and life did not seem so bad after all, though the crews had to be handled delicately to keep down discontent.

On Sunday, October 7, the men of the other two ships were startled by the sound of a gun—a *lombarda*—being fired on the *Niña*, but rejoiced that it meant land had been seen. The *Niña*, being a fast vessel, had drawn ahead, every one on board her being eager to sight land first and gain the reward promised by the King and Queen. As the gun was fired a flag was broken out at the *Niña's* masthead, but—alas for their hopes!—the mirage of land melted away, and the three ships were alone on the sea. Still the sense of land was in the air. Every one was on the look-out, and this explains the many false alarms: imagination aided vision.

In spite of this, on Wednesday, October 10, Columbus found himself being urged by the men to return. They were growing mutinous and deaf to the leader's diplomacy. Winter would soon be upon them, and they would be wise to return before it was too late. The Admiral used all his arts to allay the discontent, making promises, painting rosy pictures, and appealing to patriotism, to greed, and so on,

until he won a few more days' respite from their importunings. Columbus, had he been a less resolute man, would have failed. Reward was near, and some inner conviction urged him to press on.

Then came October 11, destined to be one of the red-letter days of history, for at ten o'clock in the evening Columbus, standing on the quarterdeck, saw a distant light moving along as though some one were carrying it on a shore. He adjured every man to keep a strict watch and

further promised a silk jacket to whoever should first see the land, in addition to the annuity of 10,000 maravedis which the King and Queen had promised the lucky discoverer. Four hours later—that is, at two o'clock in the morning of October 12, which was Friday—land was sighted by one Roderigo de Triana, on the *Pinta*. It was six miles away—a low-lying island but dimly seen in the darkness. The ships took in sail and lay till daylight, when a small island revealed itself. From the decks the sailors saw many people of a brown colour and quite naked moving about on the white sandy beach. Columbus, dressed in his best, went ashore in a boat, and there he

unfurled the royal standard and claimed the land in the name of Spain, calling it San Salvador.

Columbus, in discovering the West Indies for Spain, was the unwitting cause of what was to be a reign of terror on the American littoral for the next two centuries, though we can hardly blame the Admiral for that.

It is interesting to read that Columbus never realized his mistake in thinking he had found Cipango[1] and India. To the end of his days he remained under the impression that the islands he had discovered were but part of the land of India. Nor did his contemporaries think otherwise.

Imagine the feelings of the men when they stepped on to solid earth after wondering for seventy days if they would ever see land again. How sincere must have been their pious prayers that day! That palm-fringed isle was an earthly paradise to those worn and anxious sailors, who for more than two months had endured physical wretchedness, living on poor food, sleeping in vile holes, and for ever straining their eyes to the west. Now the goal was reached, and they were not disappointed. Luscious fruits were theirs for the taking, but above all here was safety, a respite from the perils of the dread Atlantic.

With the Admiral in the first boats to go ashore were the two brothers, captains of the *Niña* and *Pinta*, Vicente Yañez and Martin Alonzo Pinzon, and here, where white men had never trod before, these gentlemen of Spain knelt in thanksgiving, while the friendly but half-frightened natives looked on at the men and the ships which they truly believed had come down from the skies. Thus was ended the most momentous sea-voyage in the history of the world. The rest of the log of Las Casas is of lesser import, though not less interesting. The main object had been accomplished. It remained but to carry the great news back

[1] Marco Polo's name for Japan.

to Ferdinand and Isabella, accompanied, of course, by golden proof that the treasures of the Indies had been found.

For some months the squadron sailed among the islands, Columbus the while keeping an attentive ear for any rumours of gold. During this cruising the *Santa Maria* was allowed, through the carelessness of the watch on deck, to drift ashore on to some rocks, where she became fixed and had to be abandoned, a total wreck. This misfortune happened on Christmas Day, and thereafter Columbus transferred his flag to the *Niña*.

No great quantity of gold was found, but the Indians told of much treasure in the richer countries to the west. But the Admiral was anxious to return to Spain: his caravels were leaking and in need of dockyard attention. So in the middle of January 1493, with island fruits and many native curios on board, besides a handful of natives of both sexes, the *Niña* and *Pinta* set sail for Spain; Columbus vowing to return again and prosecute his search for the mainland of India, a vow which he was thrice able to perform.

On the return crossing the Atlantic was not so calm, and during one particularly heavy gale the two ships were in such great danger that every man on board, from Columbus downward, made vows to fast upon bread and water the first Saturday after their arrival on shore, should they be so fortunate as to escape. And when lots were drawn to see who should go upon a pilgrimage in penitential garments to St Mary de la Cinta at Huelva the business fell to the Admiral. Which is an interesting commentary on the deep religious sense of such a practical man of science as Columbus was. On March 4 in a heavy sea the two ships ran into the mouth of the Tagus—their first landfall—for shelter. A few days later Columbus sailed around to Cadiz, where the voyage ended.

In 1893 there sailed from Cadiz full-sized replicas of the *Santa Maria*, the *Niña*, and the *Pinta* over the track taken by the Admiral four centuries before. Their ultimate destination was Lake Michigan, a thousand miles from the sea, which they reached *via* river and canal. They represented Spain at the World's Columbian Exposition at Chicago, and were built from old plans in the Spanish Government's navy yard at La Carraca. Captain Concas, who navigated the modern *Santa Maria* with a Spanish crew, reported the ship to be terrible in a head sea, as she pitched badly enough to shake the sticks out of her. Nevertheless the time taken to cross—thirty-six days—was an improvement on the time occupied on the original passage; in fact, just half the number of days.

Since 1893 other replicas of old ships have crossed the Atlantic to America under their own sail. In 1909 a full-sized reproduction of Henry Hudson's *Halve Maen* [1] was launched in Holland, and sailed to New York to take part in the Hudson-Fulton celebrations there. By means of this replica of the *Halve Maen*, the first sailing-ship to plough the waters of the majestic Hudson river, the people of our day saw in what kind of bluff-bowed, cranky little vessel the intrepid Englishman had crossed the Atlantic.

But the most interesting of these latter-day replicas was the Viking ship built by the Norwegians and sailed from Norway across the North Atlantic to Newport, Rhode Island, in 1893, the same year that the Spaniards sent over the three caravels. This Viking ship was a copy of the famous Gokstad ship unearthed in Norway in 1880, and, like all Viking craft, was undecked. So the Norwegians crossed the Western Ocean in an open boat, and with nothing but a large square sail and a small jib in the way of canvas, which meant, of course, that they could do little or no fancy close-hauled sailing, for the Viking ships could

[1] Half-moon.

not sail against the wind. Yet, with a crew of eleven men, Captain Andersen brought her safely into Long Island Sound after a passage of forty-four days. He reported that she made a good sea-boat and reeled off her nine or ten knots without difficulty, riding the Atlantic rollers as dry as a duck.

All of which is germane to the *Saga of Eric the Red*, which tells how Leif sailed across the Atlantic to America

somewhere about the year A.D. 1000; for if Captain Andersen could take a Viking ship across in 1893 there is no reason at all why Leif Ericson should not have performed a similar feat in 1000. Indeed, men (including the redoubtable Andersen himself) have crossed the Western Ocean in undecked vessels far smaller than Viking ships.

We do not detract from the greatness of Columbus's achievement when we suggest that a Norseman crossed the Atlantic first, for the two feats were vastly different. There

FIRST ACROSS

is more than one record of Leif's exploit, and the fact that they come from sagas does not lessen their evidential value. While sagas were poems, they were also epics of true events, and were, in fact, the history of the Norsemen. Before runic writing was invented the only means of preserving their history was in song, the primitive man's history-book, and if myth was woven into fact at times it is not difficult to separate the two at our leisure.

To begin with, the Norsemen were pre-eminently a seafaring race. The sea was as much their home as the

land, and there is plenty of evidence to show that they sailed as far from home as the Mediterranean. The sagas tell of a hardy fellow named Bjarni who sailed so far to the west that he sighted a country which may have been the mainland of North America; but as he returned without landing he is not in the running as a rival of Columbus. But some few years after this Bjarni's voyage he met a fellow-countryman named Leif, son of Eric the Red. This Leif was a convert to the new religion of Christianity, and happened at the time of the meeting to be in Greenland, where he was spreading the Gospel among the Eskimos and the Norse settlers. The tales of Bjarni wakened in Leif such a desire to see this far-away land that he left his flock, got himself a ship, and put to sea

with thirty companions of similar persuasions. From Greenland they sailed south-west, sometimes among ice, sometimes in the open sea, until the day came when they sighted bleak mountains on the far horizon. They visited this land, and after a short stay put to sea again to stand for the south, where they came upon other lands less inhospitable, until at long last they reached a country with a climate so mild and vegetation so profuse that they went ashore for a lengthy stay, even building for themselves huts. This country they called Wineland, and here they spent the entire winter. When the spring came the Norsemen loaded their ship with some of the wood and the fruits of the country and put to sea, setting a course for Norway, which was reached after a presumably uneventful passage.

That is, in brief, the story of the voyage of Leif, son of Eric the Red; and the fact that the different accounts all agree on the main features point to its truth, apart from our knowledge that the sagas were records of actual events in Norse history.

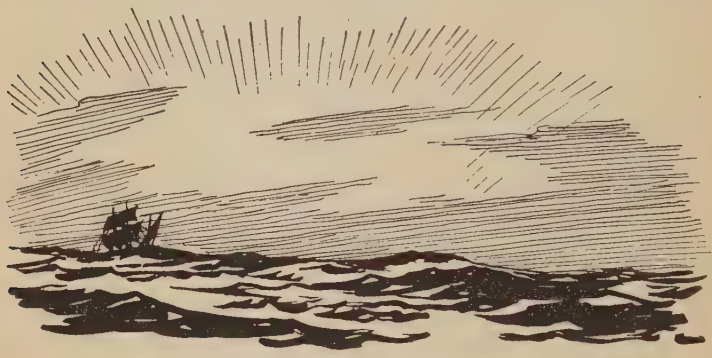
I should be grieved to think this recital of the exploits of Leif in any way dimmed for the reader the lustre of Columbus's achievement. It is true that to the first-comer should go the laurels; but here the circumstances were so different. It is true that the Norseman crossed in an open boat, but, on the other hand, his traverse was much shorter than that of the Genoese, and he made his crossing, we notice, in a series of comparatively short passages—Norway, Iceland, Greenland, then probably Labrador, and so on down to Nova Scotia, and so to the south—possibly as far as the Delaware river. In Greenland he was, as it were, half-way across before he started.

Now compare this with the voyage of Columbus. Five hundred years have passed, and no man now knows of the existence of the Americas. The pundits are thinking the

world flat or cube-shaped or triangular, according to their fancies, when along comes this serious fellow from Genoa to rouse their scorn with a mad theory of a globular world. The idea was preposterous, but somehow the personality of the Genoese wins the interests of their Catholic Majesties Ferdinand and Isabella, and the madman sets sail. He has not a handful of strong and willing men to command, but the sweepings of the ports, jail-birds and pressed men —a crew that presaged no good for success. There is no need to labour the point. While we can hardly doubt that Leif actually crossed the Atlantic, to Columbus must go the palm, for his achievement was the outcome of vision, that species of clairvoyance that is found only in men born ahead of their day. His was no haphazard business. His life had been devoted to that dream of finding the Indies. He was not a happy-go-lucky adventurer; but a man with a single purpose, to which he devoted his life. There are always small claimants who come after great men to belittle their achievements, and there are plenty of legends of voyagers having reached America before Columbus. But legend has little weight against incontrovertible fact, and that voyage in 1492 stands as a rock of fact in an ocean of myths. A Danish scientist, Professor Larsen, has claimed that two Germans crossed the Atlantic to Labrador and Newfoundland twenty years before Columbus made his first voyage. According to Professor Larsen, these two Germans, Pining and Pothurst, sought a passage to India and sailed from Denmark in 1472, stopping at Greenland to search for a lost Danish colony which had been founded in 1261. After landing on Newfoundland they returned to tell their adventures to the King of Denmark.

Once a pioneer has shown the way he is assured of a big following. No sooner had Columbus returned to Spain with his great news than every adventurer in the

land wanted to join the second expedition. Columbus made altogether four voyages—eight crossings—and on his third voyage touched the mainland of America, still, however, thinking it was India. Spain naturally had things all her own way at first, and during the next few years some expedition or other from Spain was always on the Atlantic. For a while the Portuguese confined their maritime exploration to finding an eastward route to India, the champion of this route being the redoubtable Bartholo-



mew Diaz, the first European to set eyes on the Cape of Storms (the Cape of Good Hope).

But to return to the North Atlantic, on the second voyage of Columbus no less than fourteen caravels took part, and ere long the traffic across the Western Ocean amounted almost to a rabble. Among the leaders of fresh ventures were the notorious Ojeda, the rich Nicuesa, the stout-hearted Juan de la Costa, the prodigal Balboa (the first white man to cross Panama), and the romantic Ponce de Leon, who in his old age went seeking the Fountain of Youth in the miasmic everglades of Florida.[1]

This brings us to the year 1512, and meanwhile the English, a race slow to be aroused, had awakened to the

[1] Some authorities put the Fountain of Youth in one of the Bahamas.

possibilities in the west. But, characteristically enough, it was a foreigner who made the first English voyage to America.

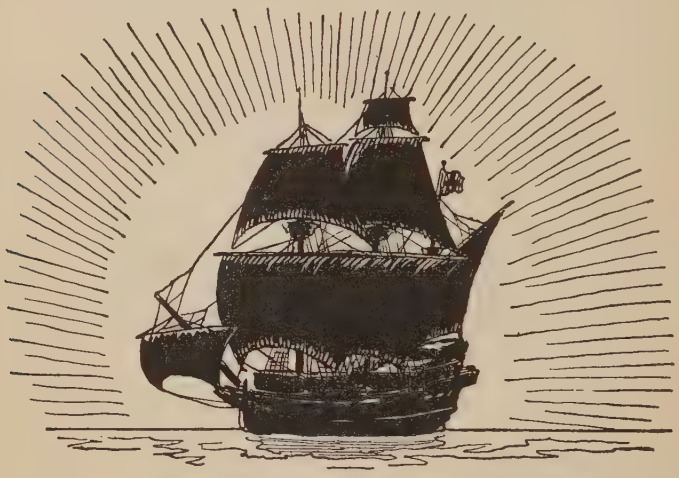
When Columbus made his historic voyage there lived in the port of Bristol a Venetian domiciled in England, one Giovanni Caboto, a shipmaster, with his three sons, Ludovico, Sancio, and Sebastian. John Cabot, as the Bristol folk called him, was fired by the exploit of Columbus and left no stone unturned until he had enlisted public

interest in a voyage to "Cathay by the North-west." Henry VII, who was then King, gave his royal support to the scheme, and commanded, as Hakluyt puts it, "two caravels to bee furnished with all things appertayning to the voyage." The charter was made out on March 6, 1496, when the New World was just four years old.

The Cabots after leaving the Irish coast stood for the north-west, and reached the American shore in latitude 56°, whence they sailed south as far as Florida before turning back to England. A notable voyage, this. They brought proof of having reached America in the very tangible form of three natives from Newfoundland, who, to quote from Hakluyt again, "were clothed in beasts' skins, and did eate raw flesh, and spake such speech that no man could

understand them; and in their demeanour like to bruite beastes."

Poor Cabot, alas! did not get the credit that was due to him for this voyage, and soon the fickle public were forgetting him and talking of another seaman, a Mr William Hawkins, of Plymouth, whom Henry VIII (who was now on the throne) sent on a voyage to Guinea and afterward to the coast of Brazil. He was probably the first Englishman to command a ship across the Atlantic.



From small beginnings great things may come. These seamen of England were waking up; medievalism and all it meant were passing, and the great Elizabethan days were not far off. There were boys at school in England bearing names that as yet meant nothing—Drake, Frobisher, Raleigh, Grenville, and all that famous company—but who were soon to be known for exploits on the Spanish ocean.

Little was done during Henry VIII's reign, but Elizabeth, with a weather eye on the growing might of Spain, encouraged whenever she could the sending of expeditions to America. The development of England's sea power was the only bulwark against her enemies, and Elizabeth

knew this as well as anyone. So John Hawkins, son of that William Hawkins, came into the limelight running slaves across from Africa to America in a ship with the inappropriate name of *Jesus of Lubeck*. Because this black-birding business (a perfectly legitimate trade, of course) was being carried on in competition with the King of Spain, Elizabeth encouraged Hawkins. But all this belongs to history. The point is that John Hawkins was the first of the Elizabethan navigators. He was a truculent fellow, as his frequent brushes with the Spaniards testify, but in the eyes of his Queen he found nothing but favour. On his third voyage to America one of the ships of his small squadron was contributed by a distant relation of his, an unknown young man named Francis Drake. Its former owner had bequeathed a small ship to Drake in recognition of his qualities as a first-class sailor. When Drake, who had sailed only on coasting voyages to France and Holland, heard of Hawkins' expedition he applied for permission to accompany it, and upon this being granted sold his legacy, and bought with the money the handy little craft *Judith*, which he contributed to the expedition.

The voyage began with a run down to the African coast for slaves, whence after many vicissitudes they sailed for the West Indies with about 500 negroes on board. It is at first surprising that the Spaniards should want black slaves in a country already full of natives. True, the natives were Indians, but, except for the Caribs, these Indians were a tractable people and quickly subjugated. But the Spaniards never had a *flair* for successful colonization. They did not subjugate the Indians, they *exterminated* them. There was no reason at all for this, except Latin cruelty, and that the hard frontier life brought out the worst traits in the invaders. So when the aborigines were more or less wiped out, after thirty or forty years of murder and rapine, the conquerors had to look

elsewhere for slaves, and they naturally turned to Africa. So began slavery in America, which has given the United States a problem that is growing more serious every year.

The history of this voyage of the old Hawkins and the young Drake is a history of the most amazing adventures. Drake was thoroughly initiated into the art of navigating and fighting. After this he was ready for his intrepid

voyage around the world. He had met the Spaniards and nearly met his Waterloo, since one small ship cannot expect to vanquish a dozen large ones; but somehow he contrived to escape, and in course of time limped into Plymouth in woeful case. Hawkins arrived in Mount's Bay later after the narrowest of escapes from capture, foundering, and starvation. But these two seamen had made their names feared among the Spanish conquerors of Mexico, and opened the way for the great company of Elizabethan seamen that were to spread their sails on the Western Ocean.

CHAPTER III

Freak Crossings

It is surprising how many times the Atlantic has been crossed in small boats, boats twenty feet long or even less. We are apt to think that any craft smaller than a cross-Channel steamer would be unsafe a thousand or so miles from land. We thought it no mean performance when light American river steamers crossed the Atlantic during the Great War, or when the Mersey ferry-boats went to the Mediterranean. It was the same with the submarines. When the large German under-sea boats *Bremen* and *Deutschland* crossed to America in 1917 and 1918 the public who read the newspapers were tremendously impressed by this daring feat; but they were not aware that much smaller submarine craft half the size of the *Deutschland*, built at the Fore River Yards, Massachusetts, left Boston under their own power and safely crossed the Atlantic to take part in the War. In naval circles the thing was taken for granted; no one thought anything of it.

Nor did 'Captain' William Andrews regard his feat of crossing from Boston Harbour to Lisbon in a *fourteen-foot collapsible boat* as anything remarkable. It was only the stay-at-homes, who take their adventures by proxy,

who considered this one of the most daring feats ever attempted. William Andrews had never been to sea, but when, tiring of working in a piano factory, he decided to visit the Paris Exhibition of 1878 it occurred to him that a very economical way to get to Europe would be to sail in his own boat. So he talked it over with his brother Walter, who not only fell in with his plan, but agreed to try to make the passage in a craft smaller than any that had ever before ventured across. The two brothers had heard of a man who had safely crossed in a twenty-foot boat, and they decided to attempt it in something even smaller. But a boat-builder whom they approached flatly refused to build them a boat less than twenty feet long, and they had to be content with that or leave it. They chose the dory type of boat, the flat-bottomed, keelless boat of the Grand Banks fishermen. As it had no keel they had a centre-board fitted, the housing of which considerably interfered with the space under the low decking forward. Whoever crawled under the deck to sleep had to lie on his side, as there was not width enough to lie on his back. A short mast eight feet high was stepped well forward, and two sails were carried, a lateen and a storm trysail. The dory was christened *Nautilus*, and set sail from Beverly Harbour, Massachusetts, in the presence of a large number of boats assembled to give her a send-off.

The wiseacres prophesied failure, and when twenty-four hours later the *Nautilus* reappeared at Beverly the wiseacres smiled. But the brothers had only returned to have a small repair made to their compass. In bad weather they made their second start, and at first had a perilous time of it. They knew nothing of navigation, and sailed entirely by dead reckoning, feeling sure that if they kept on long enough they were bound to hit the coast of Europe somewhere. Day after day they made a few miles of easting, sometimes meeting heavy seas, but gradually

becoming skilful at riding out the worst gales, until, by the time they reached the entrance to the English Channel on the forty-fourth day out, they had both well earned the courtesy title of captain. They spoke many ships on the passage, and from them got their bearings. Their greatest hardships were being wet with sea-water and being unable to stretch their limbs. England's climate gave them an unfriendly welcome, for their last days of the passage were spent beating up the Channel in a north-east gale. After

a week in England they sailed to France and visited the Paris Exhibition. Walter Andrews never entirely recovered from the hardships he had suffered, and died shortly after his return to America, but William lived to cross the Western Ocean more than once again.

He grew restless on shore, and decided to attempt a do-or-die crossing in a fifteen-foot boat. He did neither. After being sixty-two days at sea in atrocious weather he was picked up half starved by a passing ship and brought back to Boston, whence he had sailed in the presence of 30,000 people two months before. The astonishing thing was that he was picked up only 150 miles from land. Back in Boston again he was stirred by the news of a man

named Lawlor having crossed the Atlantic in a dory. The redoubtable Andrews at once issued a challenge to Lawlor to race across for a 5000-dollar stake. The latter, being a sport, accepted, and Andrews had another fifteen-foot boat built. He christened it *Mermaid*, and the two contestants set out from Boston on their 3000-mile sail in June 1891. But the poor *Mermaid* did not live up to her name. She was badly designed and capsized no less than seven times during one gale, and Andrews spent half an hour clinging to the keel before he could right his

craft. This accident made a continuance of the voyage suicidal, for the drinking water was lost and the provisions spoiled. For the second time Andrews had to endure the disappointment of being picked up by a passing ship. Lawlor was by this time a thousand miles ahead, and so the award came to him when he reached Portsmouth after a successful passage of forty-three days. The steamer which had picked up Andrews picked up also his boat, which he sold in Antwerp, where he landed.

Such a *contretemps* did not daunt the hardy voyager Andrews, and when once more in America he built a fourteen-foot collapsible boat which he named the *Flying Dutchman*, until a firm of soap-manufacturers paid him to name his craft after their brand of soap. Andrews, none too well endowed with funds, no doubt consoled himself by reflecting, "What, after all, is there in a name?"

However that may be, he sent a challenge to his former rival, Lawlor, to race to Queenstown from Cape Race, Newfoundland, a distance of 1800 miles; but having heard in the meantime that the Spanish Government was celebrating the four hundredth anniversary of the discovery of America, he tried to get Lawlor to agree to sail to Spain. On the latter declining to do so Andrews, in July 1892, set sail alone, bound for Huelva. He made the Azores in thirty days, and from there sailed for Lisbon and thence to Huelva. The Spanish people gave him a splendid

reception, and wherever he went he was the hero of the hour. After spending some time in Europe he returned to America and his home town, but not to sink into desuetude, for though he was getting on in years, the wander-lust was in his veins.

In 1898 he made his fifth attempt to cross: this time in a thirteen-foot boat which he called the *Phantom Ship*. The attempt failed. The boat was badly built, and once more Andrews had to be picked up. Then, two years later, this incredible fellow, now about sixty years of age, built himself a collapsible boat only twelve feet long and light enough to lift with one hand. No wonder people said Andrews was mad! However, though this attempt failed, it was not for any unseaworthiness of the boat, but simply because the craft was too small to carry sufficient food and water for the duration of such a voyage.

Then came the end: Andrews defied the mighty Atlantic once too often. In 1901 he took to himself a wife, and the newly married pair set out for Palos in Spain in a twenty-foot dory, a boat that must have been luxury for the hardship-loving Andrews. The adventurous couple were sighted after being a week out; after that they were never seen again.

It is remarkable how many small craft have crossed the Atlantic, craft manned by one or two men. One could almost describe the Western Ocean as being crowded with these small craft during the past sixty years. Captain Andrews and Mr Lawlor were by no means the pioneers of this particular form of outdoor sport. In 1867 the Banker's dory *Nonpareil*, with two men, left Gloucester, Massachusetts, and arrived safely at Southampton in twenty-seven days. Two years before Andrews made his first crossing the dory *Centennial* sailed from Boston to a Welsh port in fifty-six days. This craft was twenty feet long and sloop-rigged, and was the boat that inspired Andrews to make that first voyage. Indeed, William and Walter Andrews had more than sufficient encouragement to try their luck. Only the year before the two brothers sailed—that is, in June 1877—a Thomas Crapo and his wife successfully crossed in a twenty-foot whaleboat from New Bedford to Penzance in under fifty days. The boat was partially decked over, and under the low decking the plucky wife and her man took it in turns to crawl for a sleep while the other sailed the boat. It was rigged with two leg-of-mutton sails, and was said to be a good sea-boat. The beam was six feet, and the depth two feet nine inches. Their one great hardship, a common one in such small craft, was lack of room. On one occasion when they met a ship in mid-ocean they went on board "just for the luxury of walking about the deck." After a good meal and some

ALONE

leg exercise the pair were content to enter their tiny craft again and proceed on their journey.

The Banker's dory *Centennial*, of which mention has already been made, was sailed across by a man named Alfred Johnson. The year 1876 was the centenary of the signing of the Declaration of Independence. All over the United States 1876 was known as the Centennial Year, and the city of Philadelphia held a Centennial Exhibition. Hence the name of Johnson's dory. I have two different accounts of its length, one account giving the length at sixteen feet over all, but I am inclined to think twenty feet nearer the mark. Which figure it was does not much matter; the point is that a dory is so small that two men in such a boat is enough, and three is a crowd. To look at a typical Grand Banks dory one would think that she could never survive an Atlantic gale. She is flat-bottomed and has no keel, as a keel would be in the way when stowing the dories inside one another on the schooner's deck. Her sides are flaring, her stern is straight and flat, and her stem is raked with considerable overhang. Such a craft is not safe in unskilled hands, but a man knowing how to handle one could take it through any weather except a hurricane. Johnson was a Banks fisherman, and was, of course, thoroughly at home in a dory. The forward part he decked over with light planking, and under this the stores of canned food, sugar, tea, hard-tack, and fresh water were stored. When loaded the freeboard [1] was just thirteen inches! The passenger on the modern liner is often sixty feet above the water in his deck-cabin, with its full-sized bedstead, electric light, electric fan, and private bathroom. And Johnson had but thirteen inches between him and the Atlantic!

The lack of keel made for bad sailing, except with a fair wind. A wind on the beam sent the dory slipping

[1] The part of the ship which is above water.

off to leeward with nothing to hold her to her course. This accounted for the length of time—fifty-six days—taken to get across to England. Johnson had plenty of thrills. Once he was nearly washed overboard, and this experience was so alarming that thereafter, whenever the weather was bad, he fastened a lifeline from himself to the foot of the mast. In the event of his being washed overboard he could thus haul himself back by the line.

Every night Johnson hove the dory to while he slept. Three times every day he eased up the boat while he ate his meals. In bad weather, of course, he had little or no sleep while it lasted. A number of steamers came out of their way to rescue him, but he always courteously refused the proffered help. Once only did he take anything offered; that was a bottle of whiskey, which he wanted to drive the cold out of him.

Another remarkable man was Howard Blackburn, who, though lacking both fingers and toes, having had them severely frostbitten in a small boat years before, sailed across the Atlantic alone in a thirty-foot sloop. This was in 1899. After the adventure in which he lost his fingers and toes he spent eight months on crutches, but such was his indomitable spirit that the moment he was well enough he built, with assistance, the thirty-foot sloop which he named the *Great Western*. His aim was to sail from Gloucester, Massachusetts, to Gloucester, England, and he accomplished it in a day or two less than seventy days. After getting an enthusiastic reception in England he returned home, and before long was building another boat, the *Republic*, a craft five feet shorter than the first boat. Blackburn issued a challenge for a race across, but as there were no takers he decided to sail alone in 1901. There was stowed in the boat a fifty-gallon tank of water, and five gallons of oil for the oil-stove which was taken for cooking. The provisions consisted of tea, sugar, coffee,

butter and hard bread, corned beef, beans, peas, and salmon.

Although Blackburn was alone, he decided to try for a record small-boat crossing, and therefore planned to sail at night as well as during the day. He slept every afternoon from midday till six while the boat sailed itself. All night and all morning he sat at the tiller, except when preparing his meals. The reason for staying up all night was that he might keep a look-out to avoid collision with a chance ship. At noon, before he crawled into his narrow berth, he would set a riding sail and small jib, lash the wheel, and leave her to it. Despite his precautions against the risk of collision, he was twice nearly run down by steamers—this after he had been awake for two days keeping look-out in a fog. Worn out he had slept, and was awakened by the siren of a steamer. She stopped while Blackburn spoke to her, and then each passed on to be quickly swallowed up by the fog. Later he was awakened one afternoon by a steamer's whistle close aboard. Her people wanted to know if he could do with any assistance. After this Blackburn determined to get out of the steamship lane. Existence was becoming altogether too exciting for his tastes. Such men prefer the quiet life!

After a passage of thirty-eight days Blackburn brought his sloop into the Tagus, and stepped ashore at Lisbon, where he was vociferously received by the Portuguese. Lisbon was the place for which he had aimed, a fact which speaks well for the accuracy of his dead reckoning.

In 1881 two Italians living in South America, hungering for their own land, made the passage from Buenos Ayres to the Mediterranean in a whale-boat, and in the summer of 1897 two Norwegians actually rowed across the Atlantic from New York Harbour to Plymouth. They accomplished the journey in fifty-five days.[1] Their craft was

[1] A full account is given in the author's book *Sea-lore* (Harrap).

a double-ended rowing boat of the whale-boat type, and open to the skies. These hardy voyagers made just one concession to the elements as a measure of safety. They carried a piece of canvas which could be lashed over the whole boat, so transforming it into something resembling an Esquimo kyak. Just as with the skin covering of a kyak, there were two openings in the canvas to admit the bodies of the two men. They kept to their vow not to use sails, but on one or two occasions when the wind was fair they 'hoisted' their oars and used the narrow, flat blades as sails! One night during a heavy gale the boat capsized, but after some difficulty the two men were able to right her by gripping the holes which had been made in the keel in anticipation of such a contingency. While much of the gear and provisions were lashed down or fast in lockers in the stern sheets, some of the stores were lost, and they had thereafter to go on reduced rations.

In the year 1904 another Norwegian, Captain Brudel, sailed from Aalesund, Norway, to Gloucester, Massachusetts, in the *Vraad*, a steel boat eighteen feet long and eight feet in beam. This boat was a double-ender of the lifeboat type, and carried a single lugsail and a centre-board. Brudel, who was a young man in his early twenties, had with him three companions; a crowded boat! One is not surprised to hear that they suffered severely in heavy gales half-way across, with four men crowded into an eighteen-foot craft.

We now come to boats of slightly greater length and breadth—decked-over craft to which we apply the word 'tons' in speaking of their size. The first I can find recorded was a Norwegian fifty-ton cutter, which crossed from Bergen to America in something like eighty days. Then in 1866 two American yachts, the *Red*, *White*, *and Blue* (2½ tons) and the *Alice* (27 tons), reached England safely after crossing the Atlantic. In 1911 the well-

known sportsman Thomas Fleming Day and two others sailed from Providence, Rhode Island, to Gibraltar in the twenty-five foot yacht *Sea Bird*. The first leg of the passage to the Azores was made in the excellent time of seventeen days. The best day's run was, I believe, 183 miles. The *Sea Bird* was a beautiful craft designed to ride the seas like the creature after which she was named. And she lived up to her name. The feat performed by Captain Voss of sailing round the world in a dug-out canoe is too well known to need repeating. I mention him here because, in the course of his circumnavigation of the globe, he crossed the Atlantic twice, first from Cape Town to Pernambuco, Brazil (thirty-six days), and from that port to London, a mere bagatelle of 6000 miles, which was covered in a hundred days. Captain Voss had with him a companion, who suffered terribly from seasickness, and during the passage from the Cape to Pernambuco a halt was made at St Helena to give the mate an opportunity to recover from his seasickness before proceeding to Brazil. On the passage northward from Pernambuco a stop for fresh provisions was made at Delgada, in the Azores, by which time the unfortunate mate had conquered his weakness.

In 1920 the New York yachtsman William Washburn Nutting crossed to Cowes in the yacht *Typhoon*, and returned in her to America during the same year. Nutting loved the sea in all its moods, and was never happy long ashore. In 1924 he sailed in the Norwegian double-ended cutter *Liev Eiriksson*, with Arthur Sturgis Hildebrand and two others, from Bergen for New York, and after calling at Reykjavik, Iceland, and Julianehaab, Greenland, was never seen again. The *Liev Eiriksson* was forty-two feet long and strongly built, but somewhere between Greenland and Newfoundland she sank without leaving a trace of wreckage behind. She figures in one of the numerous mysteries of the sea. In the same year another American, Mr De Witt

Wells, an amateur, essayed with his son and two or three others to cross from Bergen to New York in the teak-wood yawl *Shanghai*, but had the misfortune to be cast on the rocks of the Canadian coast, with nothing saved out of the wreck but their lives.

Three famous modern yachtsmen to make long voyages in small craft are Alain Gerbault, Lieutenant Mulhauser, and Conor O'Brien. Mulhauser, who has since died, crossed the Atlantic alone in his twenty-six-ton yawl *Amaryllis* as the first part of his voyage round the world, which began in September 1919 and ended in July 1923. Conor O'Brien, who writes delightful accounts of his cruises, has also crossed the Western Ocean in his twenty-ton ketch *Saorise* with a crew of three. There is, too, that prolific travel-writer, Ralph Stock, who took the *Dream Ship* across the Atlantic *en route* for the South Seas, and who has written an entertaining account of the voyage in *The Cruise of the "Dream Ship."*

An attempt to cross the Atlantic which failed was that made by a young man, W. E. Sinclair, and a companion, so recently as the early summer of 1927, in the yawl *Joan*. As the attempt ended in failure to get across, the story does not properly belong to this chapter, but a gallant failure is always as inspiring as, often more so than, an uneventful victory. So here is an epitome of the story.[1]

Sinclair and his companion left Erith at the end of June bound for New York *via* the Orkneys, Shetlands, Faroes, Iceland, Greenland, Labrador, and so to New York. True, the passages from land to land were not great when made like this in a series of 'hops'; but offsetting this was the fact that the course was laid in northern waters, where the chances of constant fine weather were not so good as they would have been farther south in the steamer track.

[1] For a detailed account see *The Wide World Magazine*, May 1928.

The *Joan* was less than twenty-three feet long, and had a beam of seven feet six inches, but an exceptionally deep draught (for such a small craft) of six feet. A small raised cabin amidships gave accommodation for berths and a galley.

Ten days after leaving Pentland Firth the *Joan* entered Reykjavik Harbour, where she was given an overhaul before being taken across to Newfoundland. As the season was advancing it was decided to cancel the original intention of stopping at Julianehaab, Greenland, and to proceed directly toward the Canadian coast. The 700 miles to Cape Farewell, Greenland, was covered within eight days, and then it came on to blow, the little *Joan* being driven off her course and her crew kept busy saving their craft from foundering. A good deal of time was wasted while heaving to, so that by the end of August they were 200 miles due south of Cape Farewell and still a long way from the goal. After a brief interval of fair weather it came on to blow again and rapidly grew worse, until the men had to pay out their old friend the sea-anchor once more and ride to the gale. Everything was made as snug as possible, and the crew retired for a rest. That night, however, a loud noise wakened them, a crash above the roaring of the gale, and they jumped out of the cabin to find the mast overboard, but still attached to the *Joan* by its shrouds and gear. While Sinclair frenziedly hacked away with a knife at the rigging to cast adrift the mast, which threatened at every roll to stave in the sides of the *Joan*, Jackson, his companion, bailed out the cockpit with all the energy that was in him. During the night the sea-anchor was carried away, and the *Joan* was in a dangerous position, drifting at the mercy of the seas and without either sail or motor to keep her end on to the wind. A great hole six feet long was torn in the deck when the mast went by the board, and everything in the cabin was

soaked in water. The situation was desperate enough, but, by almost constant bailing and later by a partial stopping up of the leaks, all immediate danger was past, and the men were able to take stock of their position.

As the only thing to do now was to wait until they were picked up they went on short rations, doing without salt in their food to lessen the desire to drink. A jury-rig had been set up by bending a stay from the stem-head to the top of the small mizzen, which was still standing, and setting a jib-sail thereon. St John's lay five hundred miles

distant, but with such a makeshift sail they did not hope to reach the land before their water and provisions ran out. For a week after the *Joan* was dismasted they made something like ten miles a day, at which rate of progress it would, barring more bad luck, have taken fifty days to reach St John's. Then, on the night of September 7, a steamer's lights were seen, and while Jackson worked the foghorn Sinclair recklessly burned their stock of flares to attract attention. Such vigorous measures had the desired effect, and soon the steamer was seen to alter her course toward the *Joan*. Sinclair and Jackson spent the intervening time in getting together the few small things they wanted to take with them, for they knew that the yacht would have to be left to her fate.

As the steamer—which was a Dutch freighter, the *Alcoor*, bound for Montreal—drew nearer her engines were stopped, and she was allowed to drift toward the *Joan*. A line was thrown, and the warp which followed it was made fast to the bitts of the yacht. While the steamer still had some way on a rope ladder was let down, but the yacht was slipping past the wall sides of the freighter, and in the dark the two men had to jump for the ladder, leaving the precious kitbag containing their possessions on the deck of the *Joan*. As soon as they had climbed over the steamer's rail the telegraph bell clanged in the engine-room; her screw started to turn, and she swept away from the little white boat, which quickly disappeared in the darkness.

On April 25, 1922, an English-built cutter might have been seen standing out from the small harbour of Cannes with one man on board. The cutter was the *Firecrest*, a thirty-nine foot racing cruiser built in Essex in 1892, and the man was Alain Gerbault, the famous French tennis-player, one-time aviator and now amateur yachtsman.[1] His friends, with the exception of two, believed he was sailing no farther than Gibraltar, but these two knew that his ultimate destination was New York. This voyage was remarkable because it was made by a man who had no sea-training, and whose life in the fashionable *milieu* of the French Riviera would hardly seem likely to breed the sort of man who would choose to cross the Atlantic alone. But Gerbault is of just the right temperament for such an undertaking. Plucky, resourceful, philosophical, and physically fit, he had that love for the sea which we associate more with our island race than with that of the French.

The germ that started the idea of sailing to America

[1] An account of this voyage may be found in *The Fight of the "Firecrest,"* by Alain Gerbault (H. F. and G. Witherby).

was planted in Gerbault's mind when, during the War, he got hold of a copy of Jack London's *The Cruise of the "Snark."* In 1921, while visiting Ralph Stock in England, he saw the *Firecrest* at Southampton and bought her. She had a beam of eight feet six inches, a draught of seven feet, and was flush-decked, with ample accommodation below. The sleeping-cabin with two berths was aft, the saloon amidships, and with a small fo'c'sle forward. Concerning her Gerbault said, "This boat is my only home, and she carries aboard all my possessions. What do I care, therefore, if there is no wind? I am in no hurry. I am at home with my best friends—my books." Which seems to me the very best philosophy that ever came from the lips of a sailor. Book-lovers will find the list of books he carried interesting—and characteristic. Shakespeare rubbed shoulders with Kipling, Poe, Shelley, Plato, Masefield, Stevenson, Loti, Conrad, Villon, Jack London, Farrère, Tennyson, and James Connolly, the American writer of sea stories. Most of them are English, which is a curious thing, but Gerbault is not cast in a conventional mould. It was characteristic of him that he threw overboard some works of Oscar Wilde, explaining that Wilde's "lack of sincerity jarred upon a temperament rendered simple by contact with the sea." While the foregoing comments may seem a digression, it is these sidelights that give us a truer picture of the events we read about than a brief catalogue of dates and places.

For a year before he began his long voyage Gerbault alternated between playing lawn tennis and sailing off the south coast of France. During this period he was per-

fecting himself both in the art of handling a sailing-boat and testing his fitness to sail alone for long periods. So when finally he started out he felt fully confident of success while thoroughly realizing the mental and physical strain ahead.

Gibraltar was reached in twenty days after meeting with all kinds of weather; but he was in no hurry, and spent a fortnight at the Rock fitting out for the Atlantic. The *Firecrest* had on board eighty gallons of fresh water, sixty pounds of biscuit, thirty pounds of butter, and eighty pounds of salt beef, besides bacon, potatoes, jam, and the usual necessities of the table. On June 6 he left Gibraltar, his course set south-west to get the trade winds and to avoid the Sargasso Sea. The southern route added a trifle of 1500 miles to the journey, but favourable winds were of greater importance than the distance to be covered. On the third day out the *Firecrest* got into the trades, and the lone skipper settled down to the daily routine he was to follow for the next few weeks. The twelve-hour spell at the tiller was monotonous, but after the first two days he never felt wearied of it. Gales blew up, and the constant watchfulness to avoid being pooped or broaching to gave him plenty to think about. When the winds were not too strong he could read at the tiller, and every day at sunset he would heave the boat to and go below for supper and bed. He got up every morning at 5.30, and prepared a breakfast of porridge, bacon, biscuits, butter, and tea with condensed milk. At 6 A.M. he was on deck to cast off the tiller-lashing and let the cutter get under way again.

On June 15 the bobstay broke, and Gerbault had more than a *mauvais quart d'heure* making a repair while clinging to the bowsprit, which frequently ducked him in the sea. Eleven days out the *Firecrest* was 620 miles from the Rock and becalmed in the Doldrums. Hereabouts the skipper

experimented with sail-settings, as the cutter did not sail well before the wind. After a number of trials he found that she sailed best with the main hauled down and a try-sail set in its place, while the jib was trimmed as flat as possible. With this setting he was now able to get more rest. Here he observed that one could do better without knowledge of navigation than without seamanship.

After one month out and while the *Firecrest* was going well he made the alarming discovery that most of the fresh water was spoiled. There was but fifteen gallons of water left and yet another 2500 miles to sail. The water was spoiled by the tannic acid from the new oak casks it was contained in. The unspoiled water was in a galvanized tank. Gerbault at once rationed himself to one glass a day for all purposes, cooking his food in sea-water. The skies were cloudless, the days infernally hot, and the lack

of water became serious. Meanwhile the sails were wearing out and the gear constantly breaking. One day while out on the bowsprit Gerbault fell into the sea, but managed to clutch the bobstay and haul himself back on board before the *Firecrest* sailed away and left him!

The weather changed again. Heavy gales blew up, and the cutter rolled badly, making everything a chaos below. But nothing else mattered, since on July 17 he caught two pints of rain-water and sat naked in the rain letting some of it soak into his skin. But this brought on a fever with a sore throat, and for four days he could swallow no food. On July 27, being weak with fever, he lowered all but the head sails and turned in ill and weary. The heat was tropical, and the seas oily. The sails were rotting, the remaining water was turning bad, and a cask of beef stank so badly that it had to be thrown overboard. Then blessed rain came, and he was able to catch ten gallons in a sail.

Two months out from Gibraltar Gerbault reflects that he had not seen or spoken to a living creature for all that time. He had been ill with a fever, but he was happy and would not have changed places with anyone. On August 9 such a heavy gale came up that he was, for the first time, compelled to ride to a sea-anchor, but he soon discovered that the *Firecrest* rode nearly as well without one.

During August many gales were met with, and as he was getting so much cold weather Gerbault now dosed himself with quinine to keep off chills. On August 20 the wind blew with hurricane force, and the boat was put to the test. While sailing full and by under reefed mainsail and jib a gigantic wave overwhelmed the *Firecrest*, and the skipper had to jump for the rigging to save his life. The boat was buried under tons of water, but slowly came out of it, not, however, without damage. The bowsprit

was broken off and trailing by the bobstay in the boiling seas, and the mast, bereft of its forestay, was whipping dangerously. It was a man-sized job to haul the mainsail down and get the broken bowsprit aboard and lashed to the deck, but the job was done and the boat hove to while the worn-out skipper went below to rest. It is strange to think that this wet and ragged fellow ever played tennis on the Riviera.

New York was still a thousand miles away, and the temptation to put into Bermuda for repairs was great, but to do so would have spoilt Gerbault's plan to sail to America without stopping on the way, so he resisted the temptation and did the repairs at sea himself. A jury bowsprit eight feet shorter than the original was rigged, and the hardest part of this job was shackling the bobstay to the ring-bolt on the step below the water-line. This was finally accomplished by hanging head downward from the bowsprit and getting frequently ducked in the process. He became ill again, with a sore throat and fever, and lived on reduced rations. The air was colder as he got into more northern latitudes, and he again dosed himself with quinine.

On the night of August 28 the first steamer was sighted, and Gerbault recorded that he was actually sad to feel that the sea was no longer his own. The next day another steamer was seen, and he semaphored, "Report yacht *Firecrest* 84 days out from Gibraltar." It was a Greek steamer, and the message was not understood, but no matter, the goal was nearly won! After the steamer had gone he was "pleased to be alone." Then came three days' calm and heavy fog when right in the steamer lane. This was a greater peril than any he had yet faced, but at last the fog lifted, and he found himself in sight of a Grand Banks schooner manned by French fishermen from St Pierre. He went aboard and spoke to the men in his

own language. They entertained him hospitably and sent him back to the yacht with fresh food, fruit, bread, butter, and fish.

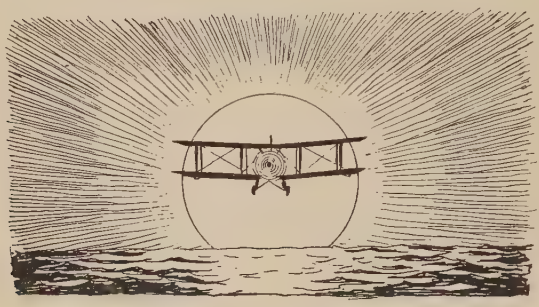
The island of Nantucket was sighted on September 10, and two days later he was in Long Island Sound. The *Firecrest* let go her anchor at Fort Totten after a voyage of 101 days. For the last seventy-two hours Gerbault had not left the tiller. For three months he had had no human society, and now he was besieged with people—visitors and reporters. From complete privacy his life was changed to roaring publicity. No wonder he again left civilization to continue to sail round the world in his floating home. But that is another story.

When I came to write down these tales of freak crossings I did not pledge myself to keep to small boats and yachts. Had some superman performed the miracle of swimming across I should certainly include him in this collection! Then why not aeroplanes? Our stage is the Atlantic; but the players on it may be boats, aeroplanes, or submarines.

America has the most daring aeroplane crossing—that of Lindbergh—to her credit, but it is to England the laurels must go for the first non-stop flight across the Atlantic. People are apt to forget this. On June 14, 1919, when the Great War was still very close to us, Captain Alcock and Lieutenant Brown (both were later knighted) left St John's, Newfoundland, in a Vickers-Vimy-Rolls biplane, and landed at Clifden, Ireland, the next morning after a flight of sixteen hours. In spite of bad weather during the flight, an average speed of 120 miles an hour was maintained. This crossing won for the fortunate men the *Daily Mail* prize of £10,000 for the first successful attempt to span the Atlantic by aeroplane. It must be remembered that in 1919 aeroplane engines were nothing like so reliable as they are in this year of grace

—a decade later—a fact which adds greatly to the credit of Alcock and Brown's achievement.

Nearly a month before this flight Harry Hawker and Lieutenant-Commander Grieve had made their spectacular attempt to get across. As with most failures, the story of it makes more entertaining reading than it would have done had they succeeded. For success usually means that everything is going smoothly. There are no rough spots



to make us hold our breath, nothing to relieve the general level of perfection. Yet who would not succeed if they could?

Hawker and Grieve, in a Sopwith 360-h.p. biplane, took off from treacherous ground near St John's on May 18, and as soon as they were over the sea dropped, by a patent mechanism, the under-carriage, thereby lessening the load and increasing their flying speed by seven miles an hour. The loss of the under-carriage meant, of course, that the landing would be a delicate business at best, but the risk was worth it for the advantage it gave them while over the Atlantic. They carried a light boat, paddles, and an air-bag, to use in case of a forced descent in the sea. The weather was bad, but the two fliers, getting tired of waiting for favourable conditions, decided on a sort of 'do or die' dash before their rivals beat them at the goal. An American seaplane had already reached the Azores on its way across to Portugal.

They left St John's at 3.15 P.M., which was 6.48 P.M. British summer-time, and flew eastward without mishap until midnight, when the water-cooling system began to give trouble, the temperature of the water approaching boiling-point. They tried everything they could to keep the motor from getting too hot, and passed through a night of terrible anxiety. On one occasion Hawker dived the

plane a thousand feet with the engine shut off, and found to his horror that the motor would not start again. The Atlantic was rushing up to them, and they had given up hope, when, within ten feet of the waves, the engine picked up with a roar—at that moment the sweetest sound in the world to those two men. But the water in the radiator continued to evaporate, and it became obvious that they could never get across. So Hawker steered a zigzag course, looking out for a ship. At eight in the morning a small tramp steamer, which turned out to be the *Mary*, a Danish ship, was spied, and the biplane flew toward her and landed close by in a very rough sea. The machine

started to break up immediately with the battering it received from the seas, which were running so high that it was an hour and a half before a boat could get to them, despite the short distance between the steamer and the plane. The *Mary* was without wireless, and it was not until a week after that the world got news of the lost flyers. Every one had given up hope when the little ship, approaching the Scottish coast, signalled that she had Hawker and Grieve on board. They had flown 1050 miles when they were picked up.

Now we come to the most remarkable achievement of all—the lone flight of Charles Lindbergh on May 20 and 21, 1927. As an example of sheer courage it has never been surpassed. Lindbergh flew alone, he had no wireless, his 'plane was single-engined, and there were no ships stationed on the course to render help should he be forced down. The distance he flew from New York to Paris was 3610 miles, and he sat alone without sleep and unable to leave the controls for a moment from eight o'clock in the morning till ten o'clock in the evening of the next day! During that time Lindbergh had taken half a glass of water, a little coffee, and a sandwich. He never felt sleepy during the trip, though the night before he left he had had no sleep at all.

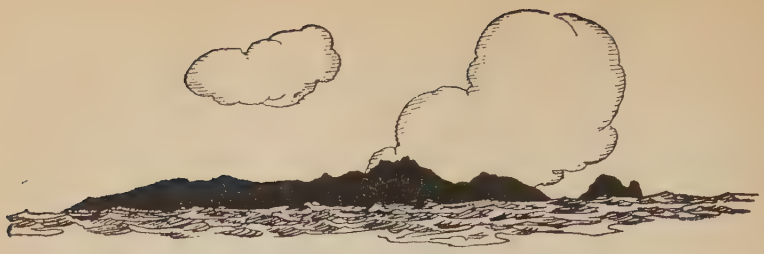
It is, and probably will be for all time, the greatest flying feat ever performed. He flew on a dead-reckoning course, and staked his life on the reliability of his single engine, a Wright "Whirlwind" radial type. For a thousand miles he flew through rainstorms, and saw neither land nor a ship for twenty-four hours. His course was from New York to Cape Cod, Nova Scotia, Newfoundland; then to Cape Valentia, Ireland, Cornwall, Cherbourg, and Paris. Sometimes he was at 10,000 feet and sometimes skimming a few feet above the waves.

His 'plane, *The Spirit of St Louis*, was so heavy with

the 451 gallons of petrol in its tanks that it narrowly missed crashing when at the take-off it just cleared a telephone line at the edge of Roosevelt Flying Field. This was the only dangerous moment of the whole flight, for, save for bad weather in patches, Lindbergh had no trouble at all. The first indication of Europe was a small fishing fleet which he passed over about four o'clock in the afternoon on the second day. Then he recognized the contours of the Irish coast, which appeared ahead, and an hour or so later he was flying over the rolling hills of Cornwall. He passed over Cherbourg at sunset, and when he landed at Le Bourget at ten o'clock all Paris went mad with excitement.

The lone flyer—"the Flying Fool," as some people called him—had come. He was handsome, and he had youth. All life was before him, yet he recklessly gambled it on the reliability of a single motor. He sat at the controls for over thirty hours without rest. Had he fainted or gone to sleep he would have perished. No wonder he was feted abroad and at home, for he had reached a height of daring and endurance that may never again be attained by men.

Of these freak crossings we can say, with all respect to the others, that Lindbergh's easily takes first place.



CHAPTER IV

Lonely Isles

THERE are, so far as I am aware, three Georgias in the world—the state of Georgia in the United States, the republic of Georgia in Transcaucasia, South Russia, and that bleak and mountainous island in the South Atlantic known as South Georgia. I should say that, until Shackleton made his historic boat journey from the Antarctic to this lonely isle to get help for twenty-two of his men marooned in the ice, South Georgia was unknown to most people. Shackleton and his five companions landed on its shores on May 10, 1916, worn out after being sixteen days in the stormiest waters in the world.[1] The *Endurance* had been crushed in the ice-pack, and her officers and crew had somehow to get back to civilization before they starved to death. The ship's three boats were saved before she foundered, and it was in the largest of these that Shackleton, Worsley, and four men crossed the 800 miles of water from Elephant Island to South Georgia.

While Port Stanley in the Falklands was only 540 miles north of the rock where the marooned explorers were, South Georgia was over 800 miles distant, but because the winds were unfavourable for a run to the Falklands and they were fair for South Georgia, it was decided to make for the latter place.

South Georgia was immortalized by Shackleton. Not only was it the scene of that epic dash for help, but it is

[1] *South*, by Sir Ernest Shackleton (Heinemann).

SOUTH GEORGIA

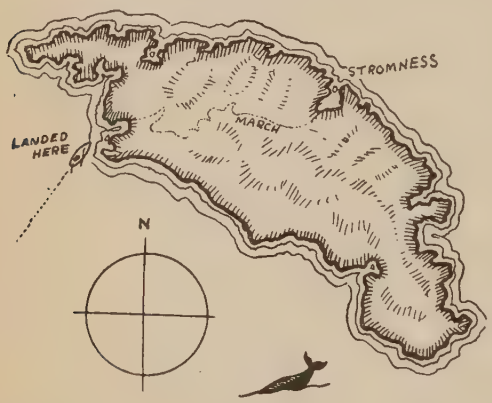
also the place of his burial. For the body of Sir Ernest Shackleton, one of Britain's really great explorers, lies buried on a frozen hillside above Grytviken, the whaling station on the island. His rugged frame prematurely worn out by a life of self-imposed hardships, he succumbed to an attack of angina pectoris during his last voyage in the *Quest* in 1922, when by a coincidence the ship was off South Georgia. There was talk of bringing his remains back to England, but after Lady Shackleton's wishes had been consulted he was buried in the part of the world he had loved so well, the bleak and inhospitable fringes of the Antarctic.

South Georgia, a British possession, leased to the Norwegians for a whaling-station, lies 900 miles east of the Falklands and nearly 1200 miles from Cape Horn. The interior, never visited by man until 1916, was supposed to be inaccessible, for it is broken up by glaciers, titanic gorges, crevasses, and snow-covered peaks over 8000 feet high.

When Shackleton and his companions ran their boat on the rocky beach of this remote isle after sixteen days at sea they were on the opposite side of the island from Grytviken, the whaling-station. Neither the men nor the boat were in a fit condition to endure the 150-mile passage by sea to get round to Grytviken. The boat was weakened by the buffeting it had received, and two of the men were too ill to endure much more. So there was no alternative but to cross the mountains to get to the settlement, where help could be found. The island is shaped approximately like the accompanying sketch, which explains more graphically than words the situation of Shackleton and his men.

The 'Boss,' as Shackleton was called, chose Frank Worsley (now Commander Worsley, D.S.O.), captain of the *Endurance*, and Crean, the second mate, to accompany him on the overland journey. The distance over the

mountains was about seventeen geographical miles as the crow flies; but as the condition of the interior was entirely unknown the party took with them three days' rations (all that could be spared), tied up in three socks. They travelled light, taking neither tent, sledge, nor sleeping-bags, but carried a Primus stove, fifty feet of rope, and the carpenter's adze for an ice-axe. They started by the light of the moon in the early morning, when the snow is less treacherous than during the day. After two hours' climbing they were 2500 feet above the beach. The sky was clear, and the moon cast an unearthly light on the jagged peaks, but the valleys were deep in shadow. Presently a mountain mist covered everything, and the three men roped themselves together. They were tired and nervy, and it became difficult work keeping a course through the fog. Commander Worsley, speaking of that march, told the present writer that he was the last on the rope and noticed that he was inclined to walk quicker than the others, so that as the rope slackened he had to pull himself up to avoid stepping into the trailing bight. The body marches mechanically when the mind is tired, but Worsley knew that at all costs he must not step on the slack rope, for a jerk on the plodding man in front might have been too sudden a shock to his sorely tried nerves. When men are in this condition quarrels will arise out of trifles that the same men would ignore in normal times. A good leader, knowing this, keeps a firm hand on himself all the time.



SOUTH GEORGIA

At dawn the three men stood at an elevation of 3000 feet and looked down on to the valleys, glaciers, and peaks on which no man had ever before set eyes. The fog had lifted, and before them lay the Brobdingnagian landscape over which they must drag their weakened bodies before they could reach the whaling-station. There was no trail, they must pioneer the way; and this lack of knowledge of the contour of the country caused them to waste strength and lose much time descending and ascending valleys that led nowhere. A long climb brought them to a ridge that dropped sheer for 1500 feet on the hidden side. There was no way down, and they had to make a *détour*. In short, these weary, half-starved men in ragged clothes were doing an Alpine job without Alpine equipment, and, what is more, they were doing it successfully. Many expert mountaineers have since marvelled at this performance.

They cut steps in the ice, they crawled over crevasses, they marched, climbed, glissaded, and finally, when the goal was nearly won, had to let themselves down a precipice through a waterfall. This icy showerbath was fortunately the last hardship they suffered. On the afternoon of the second day of the march they stood within sight of the sheds of the whaling station and solemnly shook hands. They wore beards, their hair was matted, and their clothes had been worn unchanged for nearly a year. No wonder that two boys at the station were frightened at the approach of these ragged apparitions! The station manager did all he could for them. They had baths and new clothes, and were fed. Afterward Worsley went in the relief ship to pick up the three men left

on the beach at King Haakon Bay, on the other side of the island.

There yet remained the men marooned on Elephant Island. After weeks of effort and assistance and several trips to the south the rescue ship finally was able to get through the ice to take off the marooned men, who for the first time got news of the World War. They returned to Europe and joined the forces as a matter of course, and some of them who had lived through the perils of the ice gave their lives when they got back to civilization gone mad in Europe.

Most of the lonely isles in the Atlantic are associated with tales of shipwreck or buried treasure, especially shipwrecks. Inaccessible Island, one of the Tristan da Cunha group, for example, was the scene of the famous wreck of the East Indiaman *Blenden Hall* in 1820, to which I shall refer later. Tristan da Cunha is the general name for the three small isles of volcanic origin which are situated in the South Atlantic in 37° 5′ S. and 12° 16′ W. They are 2000 miles west of the Cape of Good Hope and 4000 miles north-east of the Horn. St Helena lies 1500 miles to the north-east. These figures enable us to understand how completely isolated Tristan is from the traffic lanes of the world.

The group is a British possession, but gets its name from the Portuguese admiral who discovered it in 1506. Tristan, the largest of the three islands, is seven miles in diameter, rises in a volcanic cone to 7600 feet, and is capped with snow. Nightingale Island, where pirates' hoards are supposed to be hidden, is the smallest of the group, and is ten miles distant from Inaccessible Island. This latter is twenty miles from Tristan, and is girt by perpendicular cliffs rising to a thousand feet. The few beaches are narrow, and make poor landing-places for boats. The islands,

which are covered with thick, tussocky grass, are the homes of countless thousands of penguins, petrels, albatrosses, terns, and skuas. There are no indigenous mammals. The land is barren in appearance, and the skies usually cloudy, a discouraging place on which to be cast ashore. Yet quite a number of people have elected to live there.

The first man to settle on Tristan was Thomas Currie, who landed in 1810, though an English sea captain and his crew spent nine months there from August 1790 to April 1791 catching seals. During their stay they slaughtered 5600 animals. Then two American whalemen, Lambert and Williams, of Salem, Massachusetts, followed Currie. Lambert styled himself king, and named Tristan the Islands of Refreshment, which seems to suggest that he was a fellow who was of an optimistic turn of mind. He and Williams were drowned in 1812 while out fishing in a boat. Currie, meantime, was joined by two sailors who went into partnership with him in growing vegetables and wheat and raising pigs from a pair that had been landed from a ship. During the war of 1812 Tristan was used as a base by Yankee privateers preying on East Indiamen. Great Britain formally claimed the group in August 1816, and for a few months a small garrison was kept there. When the soldiers were removed, one, Corporal Glass, with his wife and two children and two men, remained behind. This was the nucleus of the present settlement. From time to time others—sailors and shipwrecked people—came until there was quite a colony. In 1827 five coloured women from St Helena migrated there and married five bachelors. Thus the present inhabitants are of mixed Dutch, English, Italian, Asiatic, and negro blood, but the British strain predominates. Corporal Glass became a patriarchal ruler, and governed until he died in 1853.

White men had brought to this desolate spot some sort of civilization. Cottages were built of stone, and thatched

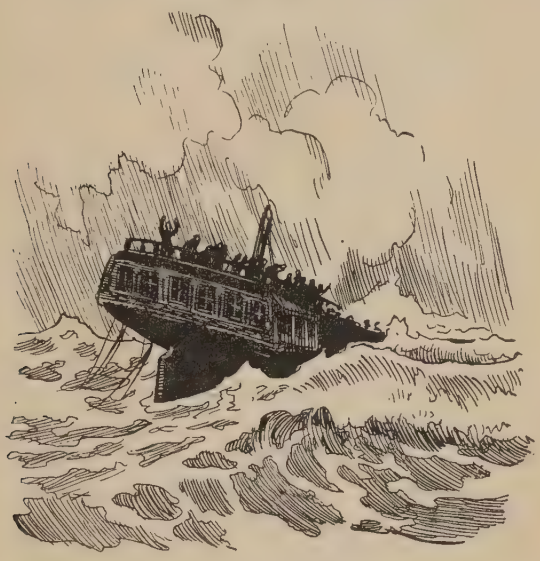
with the abundant tussocky grass. Cattle, sheep, and pigs were bred, and seal-fishing became an important source of livelihood, payment being made by exchange of commodities, money being of no use to the islanders. In 1856 the population was a hundred, but that year twenty-five, hearing tales of the Promised Land, sailed for America on Yankee whalers. The following year the little colony was further depleted by the migration of forty-five of its members to Cape Colony. When Patriarch Glass died an old man-of-warsman named Cotton, who had had the distinction of being one of Napoleon's guards at St Helena, took his place and ruled for some time.

In 1860 the notorious Confederate cruisers *Shenandoah* and *Alabama* wrought such havoc among the Yankee whaling fleet in these waters that the island for a while lost touch with the outer world. Then to these simple folk a great event happened, the visit of the Duke of Edinburgh, in honour of which they named the little hamlet that had grown up New Edinburgh. In 1880 the population had risen to 109, its highest mark. Five years later a serious disaster robbed the already dwindling population of fifteen of its best men when a lifeboat capsized while taking provisions out to a ship. After this there were only four adult males left on Tristan. Then came another misfortune in the shape of famine when a plague of rats from a shipwrecked vessel invaded the country and spoiled the crops. Ever since then it has been impossible to grow wheat there.

These islanders manage to live in peace and amity without written laws. They are religious and hospitable, and their spiritual needs are supplied by volunteer clergymen who leave civilization for this self-imposed exile. The men are daring seamen, and in their home-made canvas boats venture to Nightingale and Inaccessible Islands. Several times the people have been offered grants of land

at Cape Colony, but have consistently refused to quit their island home.

St Helena, 1500 miles to the north-east, is not actually the nearest land, for 250 miles south-south-east of Tristan lies Gough Island, a small volcanic isle eight miles long and four miles broad, surmounted by a peak 4380 feet high. It is named after Captain Gough, who visited it in



1731. The coast-line is precipitous and the nesting-place of countless numbers of penguins, and is covered with the guano deposit of ages. The island is not inhabited.

The *Blenden Hall*, to which I have already referred, was outward bound from London to Bombay with sixteen passengers, men and women, and the crew. While she was in the South Atlantic, when Tristan de Cunha was known to be near, the weather became thick, and a sharp look-out was kept as the ship was put under shortened sail. But the fog increased so much that when, on the morning of July 23 (1820), the look-out saw breakers

directly ahead the shore was so close aboard that there was no time to go about. The ship drifted on to the rocks, and, in an effort to save her from being at once pounded to pieces, the masts were cut away. The heavy swell broke over the doomed vessel, and in a very short time she fell apart. As the stern half began to sink every one rushed on to the fo'c'sle head. Two seamen were killed when the ship broke her back, but the rest of the company, eighty all told, got safely ashore, some on a hastily constructed raft, the rest on the bows of the ship, which drifted on to the beach. As already stated, the *Blenden Hall* had gone ashore on Inaccessible Island. Little or no food was saved, so that these shipwrecked folk had, for the first time in their lives, to hunt for their dinners or go hungry. There were plenty of sea-lions on the beach, but as there were no weapons suitable for killing them the people had to be content with what sea-birds they could catch. Several bales of cloth having floated ashore, tents were contrived for the women, and some who had reached land scantily dressed were able to fashion clothing out of this same cloth. Casks of spirits floated up, and for a while many of the sailors got roaring drunk and made life more wretched than ever for the rest. Parties marched over the island, and from an elevation saw the summit of Tristan, fifteen miles away. But having no boat they had no means of getting there. The seamen grew insubordinate, and Captain Greig, who was ill, had no control over his men. To make matters worse, there was much quarrelling, jealousy, and ill-feeling among the women. There was nothing of the idyllic Swiss Family Robinson life for these castaways, who seemed doomed to die on a barren isle where it was always raining. Two months went by, and then Joseph Nibbs, the coloured cook of the *Blenden Hall*, contrived to make a frail boat in which he meant to try to reach the larger island. His enterprise awakened the

carpenter to emulation, and the latter began collecting material to build a larger craft than the flimsy canoe of Nibbs. However, the cook and five men decided not to wait and to set out for help in the frail canoe. They were never heard of again.

Near the end of October the carpenter's boat was launched, and, with nine men but no officer, the carpenter set sail for the larger island. The castaways anxiously watched the boat out of sight, and then resigned themselves to wait days, perhaps weeks, or for ever. Their joy was

unbounded when the very next day two boats were seen approaching the island. In one was our friend William Glass bringing food and assistance. Several trips were made before all the castaways were transferred to Tristan. The sight of cultivated fields and thatched cottages, and the bountiful hospitality of Glass, his wife, and the others of his 'kingdom,' brought many expressions of gratitude from his guests. But soon the seamen from the shipwrecked vessel grew discontented over the food handed to them and the work they were given to do, so that Glass was relieved when, on January 9, an English ship put in for water and took on board the castaways, who in the course of time safely reached England.

In 1871 Inaccessible Island figured in a modern Robinson Crusoe episode that does not read so happily as the adventures of Defoe's hero. In 1870 a young German sailor

was cast ashore on Tristan, and was treated with great kindness by the people there. After a time he got a passage in a ship to Europe, and on returning to Germany found that his family had been ruined by the Franco-Prussian War. Having pleasant recollections of his short stay on Tristan, he persuaded his brother to emigrate with him to the island. At St Helena they spent all their savings buying an outfit which included a whale-boat and such provisions as rice, sugar, flour, tea, biscuits, salt, and coffee. They purchased also rifles, shot and powder, tools, a wheelbarrow, cooking utensils, empty barrels (for seal

THE TWO CRUSOES

oil), seed potatoes, a bitch and her pups, and lastly a few books. With their provisions and gear they embarked on the American whaler *Java*, bound for Tristan da Cunha. But during the passage Captain Mander, of the *Java*, advised the brothers to land on Inaccessible Island, telling them that when he had last passed the place he had seen numbers of pigs and goats on the hills, and it appeared a very fertile land. The brothers agreed and took the captain's advice, landing on the beach of Inaccessible Island with their boat and stores on November 27, 1871. Four days after they had landed sixteen men from Tristan arrived in two boats, having heard of the volunteer Crusoes from Captain Mander. They helped the brothers build a hut, gave them a good deal of useful advice, and then left, promising to return. The hut was built at the foot of a grass-grown cliff near a waterfall. There was a little

level ground near by in which the potatoes were planted. The position of the 'homestead' was at the foot of a steep slope leading to a tableland which consisted of four miles of uneven ground. Their beach was about a mile long and shut in at either end by impassable cliffs. The only way to get to the plateau was by climbing or by going round the cliff barriers by boat. The wild goats and pigs of which the captain of the *Java* had spoken lived on this plateau.

As soon as the brothers had their hut built and their possessions moved in they devoted all their time to hunting and tending their potato field. There was no time for recreation. Inaccessible Island is not an earthly paradise, and it yielded the brothers such meagre sustenance that they were eventually forced to give up their project of settling there permanently. Life was hard from the very first. The boat got damaged and became useless, so that they could not sail round the cliffs to get to the top of the island. The only way to reach the plateau now was by climbing. The brothers did this by pulling themselves up by the tussock grass; but one day the grass caught fire, and the denuded cliff became unscalable. The poor fellows were now marooned on the narrow beach. There were pigs and goats on the island that meant food. Then hunger became the mother of invention. The damaged boat was sawn in half, and by nailing a flat stern to the open end of one half they had a sort of dinghy with which they were able to sail round the cliff.

In May of the following year a ship saw signals from the island and approached, but could not send a boat on account of the heavy surf. The provisions now ran short, but August brought the penguins, which annually invaded the island for nesting. The penguins' eggs saved the lives of the brothers, and in September a passing ship stopped and exchanged sixty pounds of biscuits for a

quantity of eggs. In November the eggs and every scrap of food was finished. Necessity drove the elder brother to attempt to swim round the cliff to a place where he could get on to the plateau. Towing a rifle and a sealed cask containing powder, he succeeded in getting round to a spot where he could gain the plateau. He stayed there till the middle of December hunting pigs and goats, when a Yankee whaling schooner called and left a few supplies. About this time a party of men from Tristan landed and caught forty seals. The newcomers, seeing the brothers' plight, invited them to their own island, but the independent lads declined for fear that they might not be welcome there.

In January 1873 the elder brother again swam round the cliff and killed four more goats. The carcasses were thrown down to the brother on the beach. After a month's separation the pair joined each other again. This sort of existence went on for several months, the brothers being sometimes together and sometimes separated—one hunting on the island, while the other stayed on the beach melting and storing the fat of the carcasses thrown down. But the time came when there were no goats left, and actual starvation faced the men again. There was no means of getting in touch with the people on Tristan, and no ships had called for many months. Then, just when the future seemed to hold no hope, a ship put in to the island. It was the famous *Challenger*, with Darwin on board. The two Crusoes were taken on the ship and returned in it to Europe. They had been nearly two years on the island.

Tristan da Cunha's nearest important neighbour is St Helena, 1500 miles away—rather too far to drop in for a cup of tea. Whatever other event may be connected with St Helena, by far the most important in the island's history was the arrival there in October 1815 of the fallen Emperor, Napoleon Bonaparte. This man, who had risen

from being an obscure lieutenant in the French Army to be Emperor of France and conqueror of most of Europe, a master of military strategy, a leader of men whose imperious commands had been instantly obeyed, found himself ignominiously removed from the scenes of his victories and the land and culture he loved so well to this lonely Atlantic isle. No wonder he spent his exile in

brooding hatred of his gaolers and his island prison! Poor St Helena, she has never entirely recovered from the stigma cast on her by this event. We think of St Helena as the prison of Napoleon. We learned it at school, and the impression sticks.

Though lying within the tropics, St Helena has a healthy climate and is never oppressively hot. The coast of Africa is 1200 miles away to the east, and Cape Town is 1700 miles south-east. The length of the island is ten miles, and the breadth eight. It is mountainous, the highest summit being 2700 feet, which is a considerable height for

an island but ten miles long. There are no rivers, for deep gorges break up the flatness of the land. The coast is so precipitous that there is only one practical landing-place for ships' boats. This is St James' Bay.

The island was discovered by the Portuguese navigator João de Nova on the return passage from India in 1502 and given its present name. The first settlers were Portuguese. The first permanent resident, so far as is recorded, was one Fernando Lopez, who for treason had been mutilated by order of Albuquerque. He preferred being marooned on the lonely island to returning to Portugal in his maimed condition, so, with a few negro slaves, he was obligingly set ashore in 1513. He lived there until he died in 1546. Then the Portuguese gave up calling at the island and left it to the next comers, who were Dutch, and who in turn abandoned its shores when they founded Cape Town in 1652. Next came the English, or rather the Honourable East India Company, which claimed the place for itself. Its officers built a fort at St James' Bay, which they named after the then Duke of York—the James who became James II. The Dutch disputed the occupation of the Honourable East India Company, but when the latter was backed up by the British Government the Dutch abandoned the island for good. In 1799 six soldiers from the Garrison Artillery stationed at Jamestown deserted, and stole out to sea in a whale-boat with the intention of waiting some miles off shore to be picked up by a Yankee ship that was in the harbour and due to leave. But as the ship did not appear after the deserters had waited for two days they decided to try to get to the island of Ascension. The end of this adventure was sordidly tragic. Having no knowledge of navigation, they missed Ascension, and after weeks of suffering they resorted to cannibalism by eating one of their number. After this they landed on one of the Bahamas. Even then tragedy had not finished

with them, for two of the five survivors were drowned in the surf when the boat capsized as she ran through the breakers. The three remaining deserters spun such a yarn of misfortune to the sympathetic inhabitants that a collection was made for their benefit. One of the survivors afterward gave himself up and confessed everything to the authorities.

A hundred odd years ago thousands of sailing-ships called at St Helena annually, and the colony prospered; but when steam supplanted sail on the seas the island suffered neglect. The opening of the Suez Canal further contributed to St Helena's isolation by diverting sea traffic from the Cape route to India. The island is, however, in direct cable communication with South Africa and Europe. The Honourable John Company was in occupation when Napoleon was exiled there, and during this period the British Government took it over until after the Emperor's death, when it reverted to private control until 1834, when, by an Act of Parliament, it passed to the Crown. While Napoleon lived at Longwood the island was strongly garrisoned by regular troops and governed by Sir Hudson Lowe, who afterward came in for much criticism for his methods. During the Boer War many thousand Boer prisoners were taken there. The island has also served as a place of exile for recalcitrant Zulu chiefs. Poor St Helena!

Eight hundred miles north-west of St Helena lies Ascension Island, which rises in a collection of mountain cones out of the Atlantic right in the path of the South-east Trade Winds. It is seven and a half miles long by six miles broad, and is indented by steep ravines and small bays. When discovered it was destitute of verdure, but grass and small trees have been planted there since. Like St Helena and most of these lonely isles, it had no indigenous mammals, but sheep, goats, cattle, and deer are now there

in plenty. In common with most of the islands of the South Atlantic, it is the home of numbers of varieties of sea-birds, but Ascension's specialities are the turtle and its eggs.

The island was discovered on Ascension Day in 1501 by de Nova, the same fellow who first sighted St Helena; but it has never been a bone of contention between rival Governments, as was St Helena. When Napoleon was sent into exile the British Government formally annexed Ascension and put a garrison ashore there. The government of the place was in the hands of the Admiralty, and Darwin, who went ashore there during the *Challenger* expedition, likened the island to a huge ship kept in first-rate order. The present population, consisting of seamen and negroes from Liberia, numbers something like 300. Thanks to the trade winds, Ascension is used as a sanatorium, for the climate is very healthy. Once a month mail steamers call, and the colony is also in touch with both Europe and Africa by cable.

The Atlantic, like its big sister, the Pacific, has many lonely islets or mere rocks too small or too barren to offer any inducement for even the most hermit-like natures. Among these are St Paul's Rocks, Trinidad, and the Salvages. St Paul's Rocks are a number of rocky islets sticking out of the Atlantic on the equator about 540 miles from the coast of Brazil. They occupy an area of about 1400 feet by 700 feet, and their only inhabitants are insects, among them spiders, and sea-birds. As property of value they are negligible, but as a menace to navigation they are not negligible. Though they only show above the surface of the ocean as a few jagged masses of rock, they are in reality the summits of submarine mountains, veritable Everests submerged under a flood four and a half miles deep. This is the depth of the ocean floor in that vicinity.

Quite recently (May 1929) the Brazilian Government sent a cruiser with a number of experts on board to survey the rocks and report the practicability of building a lighthouse there. That a light of some sort will eventually be put on these dangerous rocks there is no doubt at all, but what form the light will take has yet to be decided.

There are in the Atlantic two Trinidads, one the British possession, a large island forty miles long and thirty-five wide, in shape almost square and situated near the coast of Venezuela, and the small, uninhabited island named Trinidad in the South Atlantic, 680 miles east of Espirito Santo, Brazil. This island, like the Salvages (of which I shall speak presently), has a lurid history of pirates and hidden treasure. It is quite small, being only four miles long and two broad, but it once was a bone of contention between Great Britain and Brazil for its value as a coaling-station. The matter was settled in 1895 in favour of Brazil, whose claim dated from Tristan da Cunha's discovery of it. Great Britain based her claim upon its occupation by Captain Halley (from whom the comet is named) in the year 1700. The island is said to hide enormous booty from the wealthy cities of South America.

The story of the Trinidad treasure goes back even as far as the Gilded Man, *el hombre dorado*, or El Dorado, the king of a tribe of Indians of Bogota, whose naked body, anointed with resinous gums, was covered with gold dust before he plunged into the sacred lake. The tales of this living statue of gold, and the wealth of the Indians on the slopes of the Andes, attracted adventurers from the Old World. Much gold found its way to the churches of Peru, especially in Lima, the capital, which was founded by the great Pizarro and remained the seat of the Spanish rule in South America for centuries. All the many religious orders of the time of the terrible Inquisition had their centre in the capital, and fabulous wealth accumulated there.

Then in 1819, when Bolivar drove the Spaniards out of Venezuela and set up the republic of Colombia, the richer classes of Peru feared for their treasure and had it, to the tune of £6,000,000 sterling, removed to the fortress of Lima. But the fear of an invasion by Bolivar's troops prompted the owners of the treasure to send it home to Spain beyond the reach of the Liberator's armies. So a fleet of ships was collected, and the wealth of the churches—crucifixes, jewelled chalices, shrines, and candlesticks—was taken on board, along with a vast hoard of bullion. Such a treasure-ship had never been seen since the days of the galleons, and the news of its departure came to the ears of sundry cutpurses and petty sea-rovers, who stood out to sea in all manner of rakish-looking craft to lie in wait for the fat prizes. The fleet was badly organized and eventually scattered, many ships falling prey to the pirates. A story is told of how the captain of the British trading brig *Mary Dear* was chartered to carry to Spain over £2,000,000 in gold and silver, and how he and his crew killed the Spanish owners that were on board and sailed away with the treasure and buried it on the beach at Trinidad.

The pirates who had left the treasure on the island were captured before they could return to claim the booty, and all but one were executed in Cuba. This one man escaped, and many years later shipped on board an East Indiaman, where he won the esteem of the captain for his ability as a seaman. He had the bearing of an educated man, and was very reserved in his manner. Then one day he became ill and died, but on his deathbed in the hospital in Bombay where he had been taken he showed the captain a piece of tarpaulin on which was drawn a map of the island of Trinidad marked to show the spot where treasure, taken from the Peruvian churches many years before, now lay buried. The spot indicated was at the base of a

mountain named the Sugar Loaf. The captain did not take the matter very seriously, but later, when he had swallowed the anchor and was living at Newcastle, in England, he decided to send his son to Trinidad to investigate. In 1880, many years later, the son visited the island, swimming ashore from his ship. After spending a night of peril there he returned to the ship and reported that the spot agreed with the plan, but that a landslide had covered the place where the treasure might be buried. In 1885 an expedition in the barque *Aurora* set out from South Shields in quest of the treasure. Arriving at Trinidad, some of the party went ashore in surf boats loaded with picks, dynamite, and stores, after getting through the breakers with considerable risk. They found it a dismal spot, dug awhile, and then sailed away, leaving the island again in possession of the armies of big land-crabs that had been disturbed by their arrival.

The next step in this tale concerns a Mr E. F. Knight, who made yachting his hobby.[1] Knight had heard of the Newcastle sea-captain's story, and was so impressed after investigating it that he decided to organize an expedition to go in search of the treasure. The cutter *Alerte* was purchased, and nine gentlemen volunteers and a crew sailed for Trinidad, taking with them the precious plan for the finding of the treasure. They carried rock-drilling apparatus, shovels, picks, and everything a well-found expedition should have. Like the other treasure-seekers, they found landing on the island a hazardous business, and narrowly escaped capsizing the boat in the enormous combers that constantly broke upon the rock-bound coast. The island was found to be a terrible spot, split and torn into dark ravines and jagged peaks of volcanic rock in all the lurid colours of the Brocken—a place of ill-omen, of evil spirits, and overrun by thousands of hideous land-crabs. Round

[1] *The Cruise of the "Alerte,"* by E. F. Knight.

the summits of the rocks and crags hung a cloud of vapour, such a cloud as might float over some inferno. From the sea the island appears to be inaccessible, as the forbidding cliffs of rock rise sheer from the breakers. After enormous risk a landing was made, and the gear and stores brought to the ravine described on the chart, but, as they expected, a landslide had half filled it with earth and rock. The chart mentioned three cairns of stone as landmarks for

locating the treasure. One of the cairns was found, but the other two had been removed by a former expedition.

The nine gentlemen-adventurers and the crew of the *Alerte* began to dig, and persevered for three months at this backaching labour, removing at least a thousand tons of earth and rock and excavating to a depth of twenty feet. Because of the breakers the *Alerte* had to lie at anchor well off shore, and once during the three months she was sent 1400 miles to Bahia and back for provisions. In the tropic heat the party toiled and sweated until the season of bad weather approached and forced them to pack up and abandon the quest. They discovered no treasure, but found romance and adventure, and returned to England as men who had gained rather than lost something.

When the *Alerte* was on the way south bound for Trinidad the party had called at the Salvages, a group of small, uninhabited isles south of Madeira, to investigate a story of treasure buried there. Knight had with him an Admiralty chart of the place, a hundred years old, and with this as a guide the adventurers set to work digging. They made trenches in likely places and found some bones after much labour, but no booty. So, after a short time, the search was abandoned, in order to push on south to Trinidad.

The history of the treasure on the Salvages begins in 1804, when the captain of a Spanish vessel, carrying two million dollars in silver from South America to Cadiz, got news that the British fleet was blockading that port and that to proceed was dangerous. He therefore decided that the only thing to do was to run for the West Indies, where the precious cargo would be safe. But the unfortunate captain might as well have delivered the ship to the British, for it was destined never to reach the West Indies. When passing to the south of Madeira the Salvages hove in sight, and the crew chose this moment to mutiny, killing the captain, taking the treasure ashore and burying it deep with the body of the dead captain lying on top of the silver chests. Knowing that it would be difficult to explain how they came into possession of the ship, the mutineers decided to sail to some unfrequented shore in the West Indies, burn the vessel, and buy a smaller one. They would then return to the Salvages, sailing under British colours, and recover the treasure. But near the island of Tobago the ship was wrecked, and all but two of the crew were lost, and one of these died ashore. The surviving mutineer, a Spaniard, later on lay dying in a hospital at Vera Cruz, where he became friendly with a man named Christian Cruse, and told him of the silver buried on the Salvages and of the crime committed years before. This Christian Cruse told

the story to a naval officer, Captain Robinson, of H.M.S. *Prometheus*, who at the first opportunity sailed for the islands to search for the treasure. A bay with a stretch of white sand was found just as Cruse described it, and a party of fifty sailors were put ashore to dig. But a gale blew up, and the men were hastily recalled as the anchorage was unsafe. The captain's duties now took him elsewhere, and the search was abandoned.

CHAPTER V

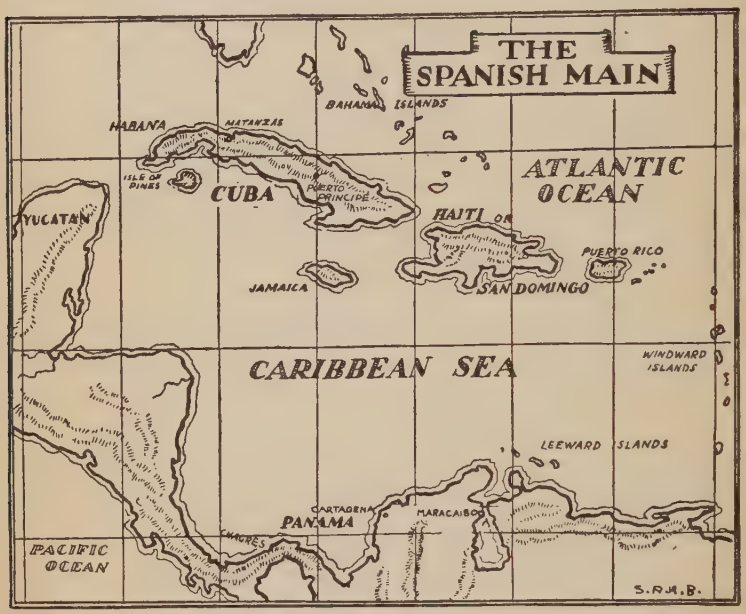
Atlantic Sea-rovers

On that October morning in the year 1492 when the group of naked and as yet unspoilt Indians gazed wonder-struck at the three ships of Columbus they little knew that the arrival of these strange, bearded men marked the end of peace and happiness in their island paradise. Simple virtues were to be replaced by the sophistication of the Spanish invaders. No nobler motive than greed brought the rabble of adventurers that followed in the wake of Columbus. They swept over the West Indies like a pestilence, plundering and killing in their lust for gold.

The Spanish Main—it has a fine, romantic sound, this phrase, but, like so many romantic names, it calls to mind a period of war and misrule as bloody as any period in the history of the world. The Spanish Main was, strictly speaking, the northern coast of South America from the Orinoco to the Isthmus of Panama, including those former Spanish possessions bordering on the Caribbean Sea; but the term is often loosely used in describing the Caribbean itself. The Spanish Main and adjacent waters were, for hundreds of years, the refuge of outlaws and adventurers who sailed the seas attacking shipping and pillaging towns with no more respect for the rights of other men than a pack of wild animals.

Piracy on the Main began when the cattle-hunters of Tortuga, or Turtle, Island, off the coast of Hispaniola

(now Hayti), were dispossessed of their means of livelihood by the Spaniards, and forced to take what they could not earn by honest toil. Tortuga was first settled in 1632 by a company of French adventurers who had come from Hispaniola, where they had followed the occupation of killing and drying the meat of wild cattle. Since this meat was known as *viande boucanée*, the hunters came to be called



boucaniers, or, as we should say, buccaneers. Living a rough life, these *boucaniers* were rough fellows, and it did not require great provocation to turn them into pirates. The first bold act of piracy was the capture of a rich galleon [1] by a buccaneer known among his fellows as Pierre le Grand, and thereafter no unescorted galleon was safe from attack by these filibusters. Here was gain and glory without work, and every scoundrel on the islands either joined or led a crew of these precious rascals. Pierre le Grand's

[1] The story is fully related in the author's *Ships and Sailors* (Harrap).

daring fired others to emulate him, nor was a successor tardy in appearing. This bravo was Pierre François, another Frenchman, who decided to attack the Spanish pearling fleet off the River Plate. The fact that he failed and was taken prisoner by the Spaniards did not deter others from attempting similar feats.

One of these early disciples of this Peter the Great was the notorious Bartholomew Portuguese. His biggest adventure came when, with thirty men in a small sloop mounting four three-pounders, he attacked a Spanish treasure-ship from Maracaibo which carried seventy men and mounted twenty guns. With amazing daring Bartholomew laid his sloop alongside the great ship, and after several hours of close fighting took her as a prize by boarding. With about twenty hale men left and forty prisoners to guard, the pirate decided to rid himself of this embarrassment by setting the prisoners adrift in the boats, a cold-blooded but simple solution.

After effecting certain necessary repairs to the damaged prize Bartholomew set a course for Cuba to take water aboard, as the casks needed refilling. But the galleon had barely got under way before three large ships appeared and gave chase. The prize was heavy and under-manned, and the enemy quickly overhauled her. Outnumbered and out-gunned Bartholomew and his rascals were forced to surrender after a short action, and were clapped in irons and taken to Campeachy, where Bartholomew was soon recognized by the mob in the town. When he heard that he was to be executed he resolved to try to escape, and succeeded in getting away after slipping his irons and stabbing the guard. He was still on board ship, having

been returned there after being kept a short while in the town, but though he was now free there was yet the problem of how to get to the shore, a real problem since Bartholomew could not swim. This difficulty was surmounted with the aid of two large wine-jars, which, with the tops closed, made tolerable floats to sustain the escaping Bartholomew as he quietly paddled himself to the shore in the darkness.

His subsequent adventures before reaching the *Golfo Triste* would fill a book. Suffice it to say he escaped all manner of perils from bloodhounds and wild beasts in the jungles through which he passed, and came at last to the sea, where he fell in with some of his old shipmates, who accepted him as leader in a new venture he had been plotting since his escape. This was nothing less than the capture of the selfsame ship that had recently held him prisoner. With thirty men and an open boat, they stood down the coast to Campeachy, which was reached in eight days. The galleon still lay in the harbour, and by coming alongside in the darkness without alarming the sentry, whom they knifed, they gained the deck. The sleeping crew were made prisoners before they fully realized what had happened, and Bartholomew stood master of the vessel with all it contained. Unhappily for him, the ship was wrecked on the Isle of Pines south of Cuba when he took her north, and the crew had barely time to escape with their lives. Bartholomew lived to experience many other adventures, but none of them brought him wealth, and, as far as his historian, Esquemeling, tells us, he died a poor man.

BARTHOLOMEW PORTUGUESE

Two choice rogues in this gallery of early buccaneers were François L'Olonnois and Roche Braziliano, who for a while were as dreaded among the towns on the Spanish

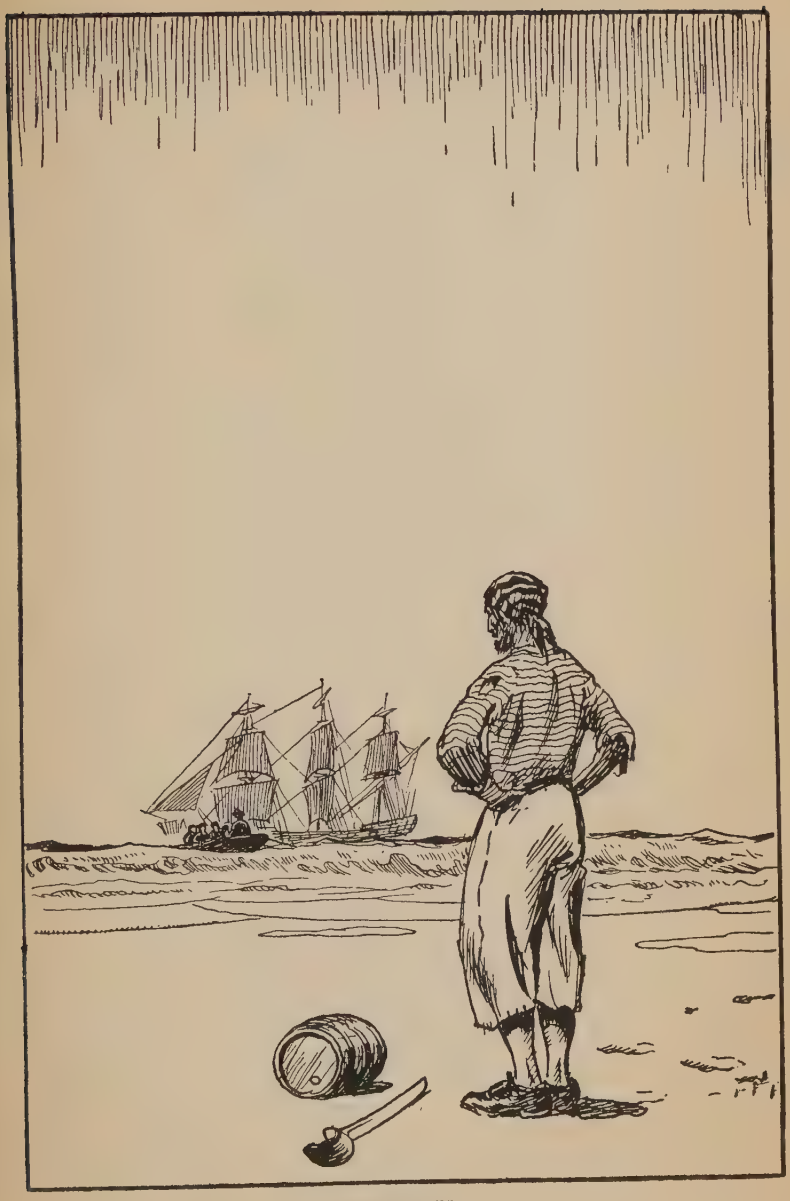
Main as Sir Henry Morgan was at a later date. Both Braziliano and L'Olonnois were inhuman monsters, but of the two L'Olonnois bore the worse reputation for excesses. This fellow swaggered about the Main terrifying the colonists, putting towns to the torch, extorting fabulous ransoms, carrying off women, mutilating men, torturing his prisoners, sinking ships, and impoverishing the land. His very excesses brought about his downfall by stirring up the whole Western world to rise against him. He met his end by falling into the hands of the Indians, which was poetic justice, since in their manner of slaying him they showed a savage cruelty that even exceeded the worst of which L'Olonnois himself was capable. Before he died he was taught a few tricks of torture that only the Indians knew. In their uncontrolled hatred they tore him apart as wolves would the carcase of a sheep. So hated was this L'Olonnois that his limbs and body were burned to cinders and his ashes scattered in the jungle to make certain that nothing remained of such a monster.

L'OLONNOIS

Strangely enough, the most cruel ravagers of the Spanish Main were Frenchmen. A countryman of L'Olonnois was Montbars, who probably equalled his notorious predecessor in cruelty and ferocity. At any rate, there was little to choose between them, except their motives. Where L'Olonnois attacked, tortured, and killed out of pure animal savagery, Montbars seems to have had some religious incentive behind his actions. His hatred of the Spanish dated from his youth, when, in a man-of-war commanded by an uncle, he took a prominent part in the capture of

a Spanish galleon. Boarding the Spaniard at the head of a party of French sailors, he fought with such insane fury that no man could resist him, and the galleon was soon a prize. The Frenchmen found themselves in possession of a cargo whose value was beyond the dreams of these illiterate sailormen. One thousand bales of fine clothing, two thousand bales of silk and other merchandise, besides a locked chest which was discovered to be full to the brim with diamonds, fell into their hands. Such rich booty was sufficient to turn the head of Montbars and some of his shipmates, so it was not long before he had, as it were, gone into business on his own account, doing a flourishing trade in assault and murder among the Spaniards on the Main. A man gets used to anything after a time—even murder; and a few dead men never spoiled a buccaneer's dinner. Montbars learned the trade quickly: he had courage and dash, and some stout lads to follow him. His name quickly became a terror among the islands, and the sight of his rakish-looking sloop made every honest merchantman run out his guns and clap on all the canvas his sticks could bear.

A typical instance of his methods was the ambushing of a party of Spaniards, and the slaying of them without mercy, when they approached while his ship was careened for repairs on the coast of Hispaniola. While the pirates were at work on their sloop a party of men were seen marching through the savannah, and Montbars, knowing that if they suspected his identity they would take flight like a herd of stampeding deer, sent some Indians to make



MAROONED

friendly overtures and so disarm any possible suspicion. As the natives decoyed the men, who were Spaniards, toward the beach, the pirates in ambush let loose a merciless musket fire that mowed many of the party down before they could take cover. The rest put up a stubborn fight, but the pirates attacked with such tigerish fury that there was no resisting them, and soon every Spaniard lay dead or wounded.

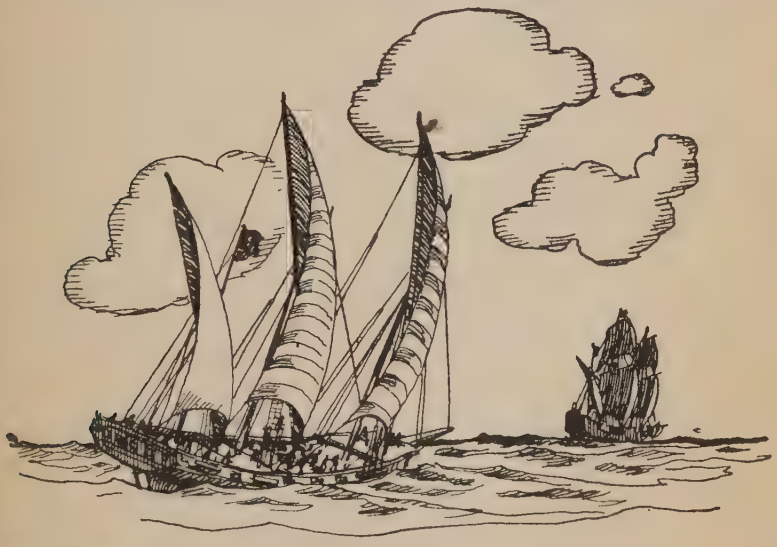
How these Spaniards came to be there is a story in itself. They were the crew of a slaver, and had actually been marooned by their own captives; surely a remarkable achievement. While on the passage across the Atlantic the negroes, who were crowded below hatches, according to the inhuman custom of slavers, had conceived and carried out a plot that is worth relating for its ingenuity. Down in the hold, where they existed in the semi-darkness, some of them had contrived to bore through the side of the ship a few holes, which they stopped with plugs of wood that could be removed at will. Presently an unaccountable leak appeared which puzzled the officers and crew, defying all their efforts to remedy or find the cause. The leak was not a steady inflow of water, but would appear from time to time, and on each occasion the slaves would start such a moaning and shouting that the whole ship's company would be warned and would endeavour to discover the source of the uncanny leak. This surprising state of affairs went on for a week or two, until the superstitious sailors began to think that the Evil One himself must be on board, and became thoroughly restive at the protracted agony of uncertainty. How the crafty blacks must have enjoyed the discomfiture of their hated gaolers! Then, one day, when the ship had nearly reached the end of the voyage and was within sight of the coast of Hispaniola, the leak appeared again, but with a greater inflow of water than ever, and the blacks opened with such a chorus of

shrieks and yellings that the nerve-wrecked crew, concluding that the ship must be sinking, flung themselves into the boats and rowed for the land. Judge the rage and amazement of the Spaniards when, after drawing a little distance from the ship, they saw a crowd of mocking slaves dancing on the decks while some of their number were clumsily trimming the yards, so that the ship began to run before the wind and out to sea. She was soon bowling along with a fair breeze, and quickly dropped out of sight below the horizon. In the panic to abandon the ship one of the negroes had become imbued with the common fear, and contrived to get into one of the boats with the escaping crew. It was this negro who had afterward confessed to the Spaniards the plot which had resulted in their being marooned, as it were, by their own act.

These precious fellows, Braziliano, L'Olonnois, Portuguese, and Montbars, earned no small fame among the islands of the Main, but there was one other whose fame as a buccaneer spread over the whole world and who carried on business on a grand scale. This man was Henry Morgan the Welshman, cruel, rapacious, cunning, level-headed, smooth-tongued, resourceful, and insatiably ambitious. He was none of your petty, snatch-and-run sneak-thieves; he disdained trifles such as would have satisfied Braziliano or L'Olonnois, preferring galleons to sloops and cities to villages, when it came to an assault. His name is indeed commonplace, and his history is not unfamiliar, but no record of the Spanish Main can afford to ignore him.

Arriving at the West Indies as a young man and suffering many vicissitudes there, he fell in with the English buccaneers at Jamaica, and by saving his gains and avoiding the rum-barrel he presently had accumulated enough money to buy himself a small ship. With a selected crew of rascals he sailed away, and within a few days had taken

as prizes some rich merchantmen, which filled his holds with treasure beyond his dreams. Success breeds success, for soon Morgan found himself at the head of seven hundred men and a pirate fleet of twelve sail, setting out along the coast of Cuba looking for a likely town to sack. Havana was proposed and rejected as being too strong, but after some discussion it was agreed to make an assault upon the smaller town of Puerto Principe, which lay in



somnolent seclusion a few miles from the coast. Since its inhabitants carried on a thriving trade with other towns and its wealth had never been depleted by attacks from pirates, Puerto Principe promised rich plucking for Morgan's men. They had on board the ships many Spanish prisoners, and one of them, having heard that an attack was to be made on the town, decided to warn the inhabitants if possible. This courageous fellow waited until the fleet approached within swimming distance of the land, and under cover of night let himself over the side and, risking the sharks, struck out for the shore. The

people of the town were warned, and while many fled to the jungle carrying their wealth with them, the rest stayed to defend the town. But the Governor's handful of soldiery and the civilians could not withstand the fury of the pirates, and soon the citizens were parleying for a truce. Morgan propounded his own conditions, which were to the effect that if the guerrilla warfare did not cease immediately he would burn the town and its people without mercy. Receiving the capitulation of the wretched people, he proceeded to torture some to disclose the hiding-places of their wealth. This pleasant occupation was interrupted by the news that the Governor of Santiago was preparing to advance upon the buccaneers with a large force, and Morgan decided that discretion was the better part of valour and withdrew with his men before the troops arrived. Being forced to decamp with but a paltry 50,000 pieces-of-eight his followers grew discontented and began to quarrel. As they were composed of Frenchmen and Englishmen the quarrel resolved itself into two camps, the result being that the two factions parted company, the English remaining with Morgan. And ever afterward Morgan depended on Englishmen for his crews.

His next major exploit was the terrible sack of Porto Bello, one of the best-fortified cities on the Spanish Main. Carefully he laid his plans before venturing on such a bold undertaking, and when, with nine ships and 460 men, he approached in the dark of the night not a Spaniard in the sleeping town, nor a sentry in the fortress, was aware of the presence of the buccaneers. No one knew of the dreadful fate hanging over the town. Picture the scene. Nine dark ships lay off the town, while silent figures let themselves down over the sides into boats, which with muffled oars were stealthily rowed toward the beach. Morgan had told his men that he meant to spring upon the town in the night and pillage and burn without quarter.

It was a bold plan that could only be carried out by men so resolute as neither to give nor to expect mercy. When the plan was divulged to the men voices were raised in dissent on the plea that their numbers were insufficient for taking such a large town; but when Morgan, a true demagogue who knew how to play upon the hearts of men, spoke and reminded them that what they lacked in numbers they more than made up in valour, they stood with him to a man and shouted, "On to Porto Bello!"

Such a rich town contained a large garrison in its strong fortress, and had not Morgan possessed an impudent daring he would have regarded such an assault as too fantastic to be taken seriously. But this vanity and greed made all things seem possible, and now he was before Porto Bello, with some of his men already creeping upon the sentinel at the outer gate. The man was pounced upon and brought before the scowling Morgan, who, under threats of torture, forced the fellow to guide the band to the castle which dominated the town. Here the attackers with great audacity bid the captive sentry call out and inform the garrison inside that the buccaneers were without, and demanded instant and unconditional surrender. The Commandant, to his credit, ignored the threat and discharged a gun or two to awaken the town. At this the pirates began the attack. Like wolves they sprang at the walls, and so great was their fury that even the soldiery could not withstand them. The Commandant and what was left of his men withdrew into an inner chamber of the fortress, where they defied all attempts to get them out. Here Morgan ordered kegs of powder to be brought up, and a powder-train laid, to suit his devilish purpose. The train was fired, and the Commandant, the soldiers, and the fortress were blown sky-high. The attackers now turned their attentions to the town, and a scene of unspeakable brutality ensued. Monks, nuns, and the civilian inhabi-

tants were subject to indignities and tortures that are best left undescribed. Panic seized the wretched people: they would confess anything to escape the cruel revenge of the pirates, and to their tormentors they disclosed the hiding-places of their treasure. Even the priests and nuns found this earthly existence precious when daggers were held to their throats, and in exchange for their lives gave golden candlesticks, chalices, and crucifixes. But this sacrifice did not save them all, for when daylight came one fortress remained untaken, and Morgan forced them, by threat of torture, to carry scaling-ladders to the walls of the castle under a hail of fire from the defenders. This diabolical plan cost the lives of many of the religious people, but it enabled the buccaneers to storm the castle with the minimum of loss to themselves. The Governor was a valiant old man, one of Grenville's breed, and he fought with great doggedness and courage till he died fighting, after refusing terms from Morgan.

After the town was taken the pirates abandoned themselves to a saturnalia of debauchery that was as ferocious in its way as the fighting was a few hours before. Many innocent people of the town were put to the most revolting torture, and the screams of the victims mingled with the ribald songs and laughter of their tormentors. Such inhumanity shocked even the Spaniards, and when the President of Panama heard of all this he despatched a hastily collected force to go to the aid of the stricken town.

But Morgan out-generalled the enemy by ambushing the advancing column in a narrow pass, and putting them into such confusion that they retired.

The loot from Porto Bello—besides a vast quantity of rich merchandise—amounted to no less than 250,000 pieces-of-eight. This feat established Morgan as the uncrowned king of the buccaneers, and every desperate character in the West Indies flocked to his sable standard. He went from one gory success to another, until, in 1670–71, he carried out that brilliant and satanic assault on the town of Panama which was at once his greatest victory and his greatest crime. He had not forgotten the President of Panama's attempt to drive him out of Porto Bello, and this attack was his revenge. With thirty-seven ships and 2000 armed men he sailed from Tortuga for Panama. His ship mounted twenty-two heavy guns, besides a number of small brass cannon, and the other vessels were armed according to their size, all being well supplied with shot, powder, and fireballs.

Morgan's first piece of strategy was to send an expedition against Chagres, which, after it had been reduced, was garrisoned by 500 of the buccaneers. This move was to secure Morgan's line of retreat after the major operation on Panama. We cannot go into details of the march on Panama, since the long campaign was mainly one of operations on land, but we may note the salient features of this very remarkable affair. The pirates, famished and worn out, fought their way through jungles and swamps on the alert for an ambush from the expectant Spaniards. The men faced starvation. They had depended on living off the country as they marched, but the Spaniards had decamped with their live stock and stripped the countryside of everything eatable. After many days the city was reached, and when the opposing forces met, the buccaneers made up in daring what they lacked in numbers. Two

hundred of the deadliest shots coolly mowed down the indifferently trained troops as they advanced to the attack; but there was plenty of fight left in the retreating survivors, who took their stand within the town and gave the pirates full measure of fighting before they were hacked down almost to a man.

When Panama was taken the buccaneers exceeded themselves in savagery. Pillage, fire, rapine, torture, and murder was the fate of the wretched citizens. Horror

piled upon horror until these human tigers were satiated with blood. Afterward came the systematic looting, and when Morgan and his mob marched away with 600 prisoners to sell into slavery very little of value was left behind in the ravished city. The worth of the booty stolen may be gauged from the statement that the pirates took with them 175 pack-animals laden with silver and gold.

This was Morgan's last great raid, and shortly after his company arrived at Chagres he was accused by his followers (not without truth) of having stolen more than his share of the spoils. Matters grew too hot for his safety, and one night he made his escape, with his booty and a few companions and with three of the ships. This breach of the thieves' code brought Morgan such dishonour among

his old followers that he recognized that his pirate days were over, and he decided to turn honest man. The British Government saw that they could use him and made him Lieutenant-Governor of Jamaica. Later he rose to be full Governor and was knighted, becoming Sir Henry Morgan—a better fate than dancing at the end of a piece of hemp, an end to which so many of his kind came. As Governor of Jamaica, Morgan developed a thin veneer of respectability, and, like so many reformed characters, used a ruthless hand in suppressing the activities of some of his old associates.

So much for Henry Morgan and the heyday of buccaneering. There were other notorious sea-rovers, of course, but their deeds have been written about too often. Bartholomew Roberts, Calico Jack Rackam, Stede Bonnet, Captain Vane, and Blackbeard, perverted, picturesque, mad, and vicious men, but one at least was as lion-hearted a man as ever trod a deck—Captain Bartholomew Roberts, who died as he lived, bravely.

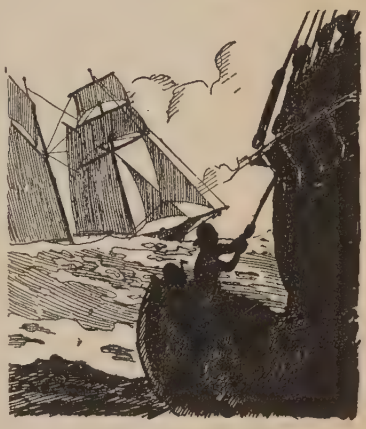
One need not, however, hark back to the halcyon days of the buccaneers for a tale of robbery and murder on the high seas. Piracy continued well into the nineteenth century, and one of the most heartless of these sea-wolves flourished as recently as 1834, which is two years after the sinister Benito de Soto had crippled the Indiaman *Morning Star* in the South Atlantic. But that is another story. The villain of our present tale was sailing in his schooner off the Main when he espied the American brig *Mexican*, and gave chase. The *Mexican*, 227 tons, with 20,000 dollars in cash on board, had left Salem, Massachusetts, bound south on August 29, 1832, to purchase goods at Rio. The silver was stowed under the floor of the cabin for safety, but before the brig was many days out every one on board knew of the presence of the money.

The passage southward was uneventful, watch following watch with monotonous regularity, until, on the night of September 19, when off the South American coast, the look-out called attention to a suspicious-looking craft to windward. All night it could be dimly made out in the darkness, following like a shadow and getting neither nearer nor farther away. Having the weather-gauge, the stranger was able to choose his position, and there was something sinister in the noticeable way he kept within sight of the brig. When dawn spread over the sea a rakish-looking topsail schooner was seen five miles away, and on a course which would quickly bring her up to the American vessel. Captain Butman, of the *Mexican*, conned the stranger through his telescope and counted at least thirty men on board. A rakish-looking schooner with her decks crowded meant but one thing—no need to run up the black flag to tell her business.

With a mind to his ship and his 20,000 dollars stored below the cabin-floor, Captain Butman ordered all sail set in an effort to escape; but the bluff-bowed cargo-vessel had no chance against the tall-sparred schooner which was fast overhauling her. As the *Mexican* had only two small guns, her only chance was to get away, but this hope was abandoned when the pirate fired a shot from one of his five guns, and at the same time ran up to the peak the Colombian flag. His craft was a regular Baltimore clipper —long, low, rakish, with a black hull and abnormally tall spars raked aft at such an angle that it would have seemed to the uninitiated that they must fall over the taffrail. Coming up to within hailing distance, the pirate shouted in English to know what cargo the brig carried, and Captain Butman informed him that they had saltpetre and tea. At this the pirate leader shouted back that he must send a boat aboard with her papers. Resistance might have brought a worse fate upon the Americans than being

robbed, so Captain Butman complied with the order with as good grace as possible.

As the papers were handed up five swarthy fellows, all armed, jumped into the boat and ordered it to be rowed back to the brig. Once on board two of them entered the cabin while the three others guarded the deck. After a few minutes the first mate of the *Mexican* appeared from the cabin and told his men to get the money up for the pirates. But the latter were in such an evil humour that before the brig's crew could carry out the order they were set upon by the ruffians with knives and cutlasses, and were driven below with bloody threats to get the silver quickly if they valued their lives. The crew tore up the floor of the cabin and lifted out the boxes of coin, which were passed up on deck. The schooner was hailed to send a boat, and presently sixteen more of the pirates boarded the brig and passed the boxes of money down into their own launch, which, after taking the loot on to the schooner, returned with twelve more men.



The arrival of reinforcements heartened the ruffians already there to a show of aggressiveness by threatening the crew and setting upon the captain, whom they kicked and beat mercilessly. Taking advantage of this diversion, the crew escaped to the hold, where the mate followed shortly afterward. From their hiding-place below they heard the pirates moving about above, evidently searching for any more hidden silver. As they noisily carried on their search they could be heard threatening to slit the throats of every man of the brig's crew if any more money

was hidden away. At this the anxious men below agreed to stand together and fight with their bare fists or staves of wood if the rascals entered the hold. But this resolve was anticipated by the pirates, who fastened all hatches and companions and secured the men prisoners. With the crew out of the way, they proceeded to disable the brig by destroying all the running and standing rigging, slashing the sails to ribbons, and cutting the spars loose so that they crashed to the deck. Inflammable stuff, rope, yarn, and tar, was then laid about, and after setting it alight the pirates got into their boats and returned to the schooner, with the comfortable feeling that dead men tell no tales.

With the captain locked in the cabin, the crew fastened below, and the brig a wreck and on fire, there seemed no possibility at all that she could remain afloat for long. With the 20,000 dollars on board the pirates sailed away while the stricken brig rolled in the trough of the seas, with the smoke from her burning topsides sweeping upward through her broken rigging and spars. They would take the booty to some South American port, and dissipate it ashore far beyond the reach of the terrible arm of the American police. But they reckoned without their host.

The crew of the brig heard the enemy depart, but for a long time they lay quiet, not daring to force their way out of the hold, lest the pirates were still standing by. When, however, they caught the smell of burning and guessed that the brig had been set on fire, this more immediate danger brought them on deck. The schooner was still in sight, so the brig's men, feeling it risky to extinguish the flames while the other craft remained in view, subdued the fire with buckets of water, but took care to allow it to smoulder until dusk, when, the schooner having dropped below the horizon, the fire was extinguished. The brig was a pitiable sight with her rigging hanging in bights, her sails slashed, and her gunwales charred by fire. But

the crew set to work with such a will that before night had descended upon them new canvas had been bent, the yards hoisted, and all the most vital parts of the rigging repaired. That night a storm blew up, but the damaged spars stood the strain, and Captain Butman set a roundabout course for Salem, which he reached on October 12, 1832.

Now for the sequel to this adventure. In New England the news of Captain Butman's misfortune aroused great indignation; however, as nothing could be done to obtain redress, the captain had to make the best of it. But some time afterward a Captain Hunt, of the New England brig *Gleaner*, while on a voyage to Africa was reading some old copies of the *Essex Register* (Salem is in Essex County, Massachusetts), and came upon an account of Captain Butman's adventure, which included a full description of the pirates. He gave little thought to the matter at the time, but while off the island of St Thomas he observed a schooner which, by its lines and rig, reminded him of the story of the *Mexican*. He studied her through his spyglass, and noticed that her deck was crowded with mulattoes. His suspicions that this was the pirate craft grew until he decided to go ashore and tell some of his friends there. It was then agreed that he should find some excuse for visiting the schooner to learn what he could of its true character. Once on board, where he was received with unfriendly looks, all his suspicions were justified, for he recognized many pieces of gear taken from the *Mexican*. Pretending to have noticed nothing, he left the schooner as soon as possible and returned to his own vessel. That night he prepared to put to sea and make sail to the nearest port in the hope of finding a man-of-war, but the pirates, who had grown uneasy, left the anchorage before him, hurling threats across the water as they sailed past.

Shortly after the schooner had put to sea a British frigate came into St Thomas, and Captain Hunt had himself rowed over to her, where he made his discovery known to the British captain. The latter at once ordered his ship to put to sea and search for the rover, but in the darkness he lost her and gave up the chase. Some time passed, and then came another one of those chance meetings which are the stepping-stones of Fate. The frigate, while cruising, came upon the man-of-war brig *Curlew*, and when informed of the presence of the pirate the captain of the latter remembered seeing just such a craft off the coast at a certain spot a short time before. Losing no time he stood for the place, and, arriving there, had the good fortune to come upon his quarry at the mouth of a river. Waiting till nightfall he sent forty men in boats to capture her by boarding; but the pirates took fright and escaped to the shore in their own boats. Fleeing inland they surrendered themselves to the mercy of a native chief, who turned nine of them over to the crew of the man-of-war. Seven more were captured later, and the sixteen captives were first taken to England, whence, by request of the United States authorities, they were sent to America (in 1834) handcuffed and under strong guard to stand their trial at Salem. In court they fell to accusing each other; but one confessed the whole story with such damning veracity that the protests of the others were useless. The sentences were heavy, but only five, the leader and four of his men, suffered the extreme penalty.

This was one of the last authentic acts of piracy on the Spanish Main.

CHAPTER VI

Atlantic Battles

ACTIONS fought at sea may be divided into two kinds—those that take place between two lone ships and those between whole fleets. There is, of course, a third class—namely, that where one ship fights many, of which the *Revenge* fight is an example, but these are naturally rare events. To the general reader the former are the more entertaining to study, but the student of naval strategy naturally prefers the complicated manœuvres of massed fleets. The story of the action between the *Chesapeake* and the *Shannon* makes far more lively and human reading than, say, a description of Trafalgar. For examples of actions between two ships—the naval duel—we cannot do better than refer to the War of 1812, between Great Britain and the United States. This war, a purely naval one, was remarkable for the large number of engagements between small vessels of the brig, corvette, and schooner type. The war reflected no credit on England, and the Americans were rightly proud of the successes of their small fleet. Not that one side excelled the other in personal bravery—let us say they were equal in this—but the Yankees usually displayed better marksmanship than the British tars. There were exceptions, of course, but at the end of the war the Yankees had more victories to their credit than the English. Nor did the magnificent success of his Majesty's frigate

Shannon over the Yankee frigate *Chesapeake*—the finest action in that war—make up for our loss of prestige. I should like to tell of this splendid fight, but, like so many good things, it has been retold so often that there can scarcely be an Englishman living who does not know the tale from beginning to end. So let me recount the story of a lesser affair, the fight between the *Frolic* and the *Wasp*, which is a story that does not end at all as we should expect.

On October 13, 1812, the American eighteen-gun ship-sloop *Wasp*, Captain Jones, with a crew of 137 men, sailed out of the Delaware river bound south to harry British merchantmen in the West Indies. Three days after leaving a heavy gale blew up, and the *Wasp* lost her jib-boom and two men who were out on it at the time. The next day, October 17, the weather had moderated, and several sail were sighted. These were a convoy of merchantmen from Honduras bound for England, and they were protected by the British eighteen-gun brig-sloop *Frolic*, Captain Whinyates, with a crew of 110. The *Frolic* had also suffered the loss of spars in the same gale that had overtaken the *Wasp*. On the eighteenth, a clear day, the British ship, seeing the *Wasp* to leeward and recognizing her as an enemy vessel, hoisted the Spanish colours as a *ruse de guerre* to decoy the stranger while the convoy scattered and escaped.

Just before noon the two men-of-war were within gun-shot and the action began. The ships sailed parallel to each other about sixty yards apart, a point-blank range. A heavy sea was running, and each vessel constantly rolled her guns' muzzles under. The *Frolic* kept up a rapid fire, but most of the shot went through the *Wasp's* rigging, doing little damage to the hull or the crew. The fire from the Yankee, though slower, was much more deadly, nearly every salvo reaching its mark. Within five minutes

STANLEY ROGERS
LORD NELSON

of first opening fire the *Wasp's* main-topmast fell, and a few minutes later the spanker gaff and mizen topgallant mast came down, and most of the rigging was shot away. But this damage was less serious than the havoc wrought on board the *Frolic*. The men fought with dogged courage even when the fight became hopeless. The slaughter was terrible; a raking fire had wiped out many of the gun-crews. The end came when the *Frolic* fell aboard the *Wasp*, her jib-boom running between the main and mizen rigging of the Yankee ship. The enemy boarded by the bowsprit, which so opportunely provided a means of entrance, and when they jumped on to the brig's deck they met with no resistance. Out of 110 men but twenty remained unhurt, and these were below serving the guns. As the boarders advanced with drawn cutlasses along the deck of the *Frolic* they were met by Captain Whinyates (who was severely wounded) and three or four of his men. The *Frolic* was surrendered after forty-three minutes' fighting, and such was her condition that immediately after the surrender her two masts tottered and fell, the foremast fifteen feet above the deck and the main off short. Every officer was wounded, and thirty men were killed out of a total casualty list of ninety men.

It had been a contest of gunnery, and the enemy won by his superior marksmanship, though both sides fought with equal bravery.

Now comes the anticlimax. While the *Wasp* stood by the crippled *Frolic* a man-of-war hove in sight. It was the British 74-gun ship *Poictiers*, Captain (later Sir) John Poo Beresford. When Captain Jones recognized her as an enemy he did the only thing possible—tried to escape. But, with his sails slashed to rags and his rigging half shot away, he could make no speed to get away. So the game little victor herself became a prize, and, with the *Frolic*, was taken to Bermuda. Captain Jones and his crew were

shortly afterward exchanged, and Congress voted them 25,000 dollars prize-money.

On May 1, 1814, a new *Wasp* put to sea from an American shipyard. Her commander took her South, where she had several successful actions with the enemy. Then, some time during the month of October, she disappeared, and was never heard of again. The Americans also built a heavy sloop-of-war which they named the *Frolic*, probably as a reminder that for a few short hours they had possessed an enemy prize of that name. This *Frolic*, under Master Commandant Joseph Bainbridge, had a short and exciting life. Her first encounter was with a privateer in February 1814. The privateer was signalled to surrender, and on her refusing to do so the Yankee opened fire. The privateer showed fight, but was quickly sunk by a broadside from the man-of-war. Then in the following April the *Frolic* had the misfortune to fall in with the British 36-gun frigate *Orpheus*, Captain Pigot, accompanied by the 12-gun schooner *Shelbourne*, under Lieutenant Hope. The *Frolic* did her best to escape, but she was leaking so badly that her hull became heavy with water. First one anchor was cut loose, then another, until all were gone. Next her guns were sacrificed to lighten the waterlogged hull, but it was all in vain. The enemy rapidly gained on her, and she was finally made a prize.

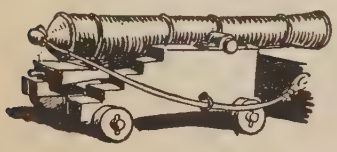
The Americans had a liking for terrifying names for their new men-of-war. There were, besides the *Wasp*, the *Rattlesnake* and the *Hornet*, the latter an 18-gun brig. Under Captain Biddle it figured in a curious action with a British war-vessel, curious inasmuch as the action occurred

after peace had been signed. The peace treaty was signed at Ghent on Christmas Eve 1814, but was not ratified at Washington until February 18, 1815. Meanwhile, several men-of-war were scattered about the Atlantic, and, as neither cable nor wireless existed then, it was a matter of weeks or months before all of the scattered ships could be communicated with.

It was on March 18, a month after the peace treaty had been ratified by Congress, that the *Hornet*, while off Tristan da Cunha, spied a sail which turned out to be the British brig-sloop *Penguin*, Captain Dickenson. The *Penguin* was a new vessel carrying a crew of 132 men. A heavy sea was running as the two ships approached each other with guns run out and the gunners standing by with their smoking fuses. As they drew within range both opened fire, and almost the first shot from the *Hornet* killed the British captain. The two vessels continued to close in until the *Penguin's* jib-boom ran in between the main and mizen of the *Hornet*. It was a repetition of the *Frolic* and *Wasp* fight. Now the *Hornet* ran ahead, carrying away the *Penguin's* bowsprit, and with the snapping of the forestays the fore-mast came crashing down. The *Hornet* wore ship, but the *Penguin* was too disabled to follow and remained more or less unmanageable. Her fore-mast was gone, another main was tottering; most of her guns were dismounted, and as she was no longer able to fight, her colours were struck. The action had lasted twenty minutes, and the *Hornet* had suffered very little damage, while the *Penguin* was such a wreck that the victors

destroyed her, as there were no means of repairing such extensive damage, and they did not wish her to fall into the hands of her late owners, who could have towed her to St Helena for refitting.

The *Hornet* stood away with her 'tween decks crowded with prisoners, when two sail appeared. They proved to be the Yankee men-of-war *Tom Bowline* and *Peacock*. The latter joined the *Hornet*, and remained in the vicinity of Tristan for a while, until the *Hornet* once more began cruising alone. Shortly after she had left the *Peacock* she narrowly escaped capture by H.M.S. *Cornwallis* (74 guns). The Americans first took the distant battleship to be an East Indiaman, and were for giving chase until they discovered the mistake. The little *Hornet* had no choice but to surrender or turn tail and flee, and the latter course was naturally chosen. Her captain ordered the ship to be lightened as much as possible. The stores were thrown over, and during the night Captain Biddle hoped to escape, but at dawn the *Cornwallis* was seen not far astern to leeward. All day the chase endured. At sunset the seventy-four opened fire. The Yankee captain grew so desperate that he ordered everything over that could be spared. All anchors, extra spars, some ballast, the round shot and six guns, and the longboat were dropped into the sea, and the *Hornet* gained a little. But the pursuer hung on until the next morning, when at daylight she was so far astern that she gave up the chase, and the lightened brig, rolling heavily in the sea-way, stood north for home and safety.



Blood may be thicker than water, but when brother fights brother the conflict is usually fiercer than when the opponents are strangers to each other. Civil wars are marked for their intense bitterness of feeling, and the war

between the Yankees and the Confederates from 1860 to 1865 is a case in point. The hatred between the Northerners and the Southerners was far greater than the hatred between the opposing forces in the Great War. I state the fact: I do not attempt to explain it. In the second year of the Civil War there occurred a notable sea-duel between two evenly matched men-of-war both belonging to one nation, but a nation divided. I refer to the action between the *Alabama* and the *Kearsarge*. For those who are unfamiliar with this fight here is, briefly, the story.

The *Alabama*, a commerce-destroyer built to sail or steam, was launched at Liverpool, and put to sea on July 29, 1862, for her trial ship—ostensibly. Instead of returning to the Mersey, however, she steamed for the Azores under the command of Captain Raphael Semmes, a Confederate officer, who proceeded to the Atlantic, capturing and burning a number of Yankee whalers. This brought a protest from the Northern Government, who pointed out that this action of a friendly power in allowing the *Alabama* to be sold to the Confederates constituted a breach of neutrality. But nothing was done about it, and the *Alabama* roamed over the Atlantic causing great losses among the Northern merchant shipping. On the way to the West Indies to coal she took twenty prizes, and after coaling steamed down the coast of Brazil, adding eighteen more to her bag. She became the terror of those waters, and the master of every Northern vessel on the Atlantic kept an anxious look-out for the dreaded cruiser. Every plume of smoke on the horizon might be the *Alabama*, and every shipmaster stood ready to turn tail and run at the first sight of a distant steamer. While the Confederate cruiser wrought much destruction and sank any Yankee vessel not worth making a prize, the prisoners were invariably treated well. Many instances were told of Captain

Semmes' courtesy and consideration for the passengers and crews of vessels so unfortunate as to fall into his company.

Like all commerce-raiders, the *Alabama* had her own troubles. As soon as the news of her depredations in the Atlantic reached Washington Federal men-of-war were sent out to find her. The hunter became the hunted, and a vast game of hide-and-seek ensued. In eluding the Northern cruisers the *Alabama* was considerably aided by the absence of the submarine Atlantic telegraph—and, indeed, the wireless. At this date the Atlantic cable had not been laid—and news travelled no faster than ships.

For two wild and lawless years the *Alabama* had cruised the seas when, on June 11, 1864, she entered Cherbourg Harbour, a fatal blunder. While she was there the Federal sloop-of-war *Kearsarge*, Captain Winslow, entered the harbour. Seeing, to his great astonishment, the *Alabama*, Captain Winslow without anchoring ordered his ship to steam outside the territorial three-mile limit and wait, since he could not fight inside a French harbour. Finding himself trapped, Captain Semmes sent a note to the Federal consul in Cherbourg informing him of his willingness to fight, and without waiting for an answer prepared to put to sea. Both vessels were barque-rigged, and both were built of wood; but there was a slight advantage in weight of metal to the *Kearsarge*.

The *Alabama* steamed out of Cherbourg Harbour to meet her waiting adversary on a fine sunny morning on June 19, 1864, just as they were getting ready for divine service on the *Kearsarge*. Seeing the *Alabama*, Captain Winslow put away his prayer-book and quietly gave the order to clear the ship for action. The men took action stations, and the first shot was fired by the *Alabama* at eleven o'clock. She fired again as she approached, but Captain Winslow waited. (How often have those commanders who have held their fire until the last possible

minute and then poured in a withering rain of shot scored a crushing victory!) What was the matter with the *Kearsarge*? She did not fire. The *Alabama* approached closer to her enemy, firing, it seemed, a little recklessly. At any rate, the shot seemed to have very little effect. Then of a sudden, like a clap of thunder, the guns of the *Kearsarge* crashed out, and the *Alabama* shuddered with the shock of it. She was hit again and again until the water poured in and her fires were put out. Her spars were shot through, and her funnels riddled. Captain

Semmes tried hard to save his ship by getting within the three-mile limit, but Captain Winslow, anticipating this manœuvre, prevented it. Now the *Alabama* was so damaged that she could not float much longer, and when her captain saw that she was sinking he struck his flag and at the same time ordered every man to save himself.

As the *Alabama* sank the survivors jumped into the sea and were picked up later. Semmes himself was rescued from the sea by the British private yacht *Deerhound*, which had come up in time to witness the *coup de grâce*. The action lasted one hour, and it is instructive to note that while the *Alabama* fired 370 rounds, the *Kearsarge* fired no more than 173 shot—less than half as many as her adversary. What a lesson in thrift!

It has not been my purpose here to recount the most notable battles on the Atlantic. Those heroic tales have been told a thousand times, and will no longer bear repetition. Unquestionably the last fight of the *Revenge* was one of the most amazing pieces of audacity and sheer courage that the world has ever known, but who is there

who is not familiar with this stirring tale? After the *Revenge* fight there is no more daring tale in British naval history than the action fought between the little Elizabethan barque *Content* and a Spanish galleon off the Isle of Pines in the West Indies. The reckless courage and dash of these Elizabethan seamen was something approaching the supernatural, and we can only attribute it to the spirit of that age—a spirit that certainly does not so universally exist now.

The *Content*, in company with three other men-of-war,

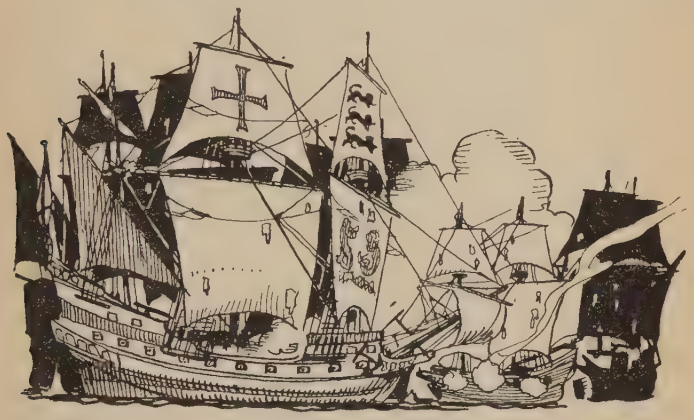
was sailing in a light breeze off the western point of Cuba when a fleet of Spanish war-ships was sighted to windward. The English vessels, being so hopelessly outnumbered, tried to escape, and three of them got away, leaving the little *Content* lagging so far behind that the enemy rapidly came up with her. When her captain, Nicholas Lisle, realized that he must fight or surrender he chose to fight, and at once endeavoured to get to windward of the Spaniards. The nearest enemy ship was a huge galleon crowded with men who watched with amazement and derision the little barque with her crew of twenty-three men showing fight. As the *Content* bore down to the towering galleon the latter's guns could not be depressed sufficiently to touch the little barque, which now swept under the Spaniard's stern and poured shot from her toy guns into the Admiral's cabin-windows. As she passed round the stern of the galleon the *Content* found herself facing two Spanish vessels of smaller size. At this point the wind dropped, and English and Spaniard lay becalmed pouring shot into each other's hulls. When the unequal duel had gone on for some time two large galleons picked up a breeze which had not yet reached the *Content*, and, with their painted sails filling out, bore down on the helpless barque. The *Content* had the land close aboard, and the galleons were to windward. The breeze had reached her, but she could not retreat to windward in the face of that wall of ships. The Spaniards were confident they had the enemy fairly caught. They clewed up and furled their sails to avoid running on to the lee-shore, and assumed that the Englishman would do likewise. But Nicholas Lisle noticed that close to the land the water would float his small barque where the galleons would have run aground, so, taking advantage of this, he was able to draw away where the larger ships could not follow. But they came in as far as they dare and continued to fire on the trapped barque until she was riddled with

holes above the water-line. The position seemed hopeless. The breakers were close aboard, and further retreat was impossible. The cliffs, rising sheer from the sea, made retreat ashore out of the question, and even had the English sailors been able to escape to the island they would have been in enemy country. Just when there seemed no help the wind changed and blew off the land. At once Nicholas Lisle set his men hastily repairing the broken gear, splicing rigging, and fishing spars that were splintered by shot. When the worst damage was thus temporarily repaired the *Content* sailed parallel with the coast over the shallows until the chance offered to try to break through the Spanish ships. The unwieldy galleons could not manœuvre so quickly as the little barque, and now her inferiority in size was an advantage. She did, indeed, come within the range of one of the enemy, but after an exchange of fire the *Content* drew away, and after some hours had left the galleons hull down astern.

The survivors of the *Content* now had time to take stock of things. They could congratulate themselves on having escaped, but their ship was in a terrible condition, and the decks ran with her defenders' blood. Exhausted by the long hours of fighting, the crew—those who were not casualties—set about getting the ship in order. The decks were washed, wounded were attended to in the crude and brutal fashion of the day, and the rigging and spars were further strengthened and repaired. The enemy were out of sight astern, and hopes were growing of finding the other English ships, when the tired men saw two low, wicked-looking galleys approaching at a fast rate from the windward. Fate seemed on the side of the Spaniards that day, for the Englishmen hardly hoped to escape a second time, especially in their weakened state. But they quietly prepared to receive the enemy without thought of surrender. As the long galleys propelled by great sweeps sped through

the water the crew of the *Content* noted that they were packed with men in armour. While they waited the approach of the galleys they loaded the guns and then knelt to sing the twenty-fifth Psalm.

By now the leading galley had approached so close that her beak-head ploughed through the cabin-windows of the *Content*, smashing up the captain's quarters. Seeing that the galley was going to run down the *Content*, Captain



THE "CONTENT"

Lisle brought some men on to the poop, where they poured down such a raking fire into the galley that the gunners left the guns to take shelter, deserting their posts until their craft had drifted away from the Englishman. Such a fierce onslaught intimidated the crew of the second galley, so that it stood off and kept up an incessant fire at a comparatively long range. Both galleys now stood off bombarding the *Content* until it came on to blow half a gale, when they abandoned the fight after chasing the barque until nightfall.

The *Content* was literally shot to pieces. If she had met another enemy ship she would have been unable to fight, for her ammunition had been expended on the galleys.

Moreover, of her crew of twenty-three only thirteen were left. Lucky thirteen! These men somehow contrived to splice, fish, nail, and frap their little craft together and get across the Atlantic to England without further molestation and without foundering.

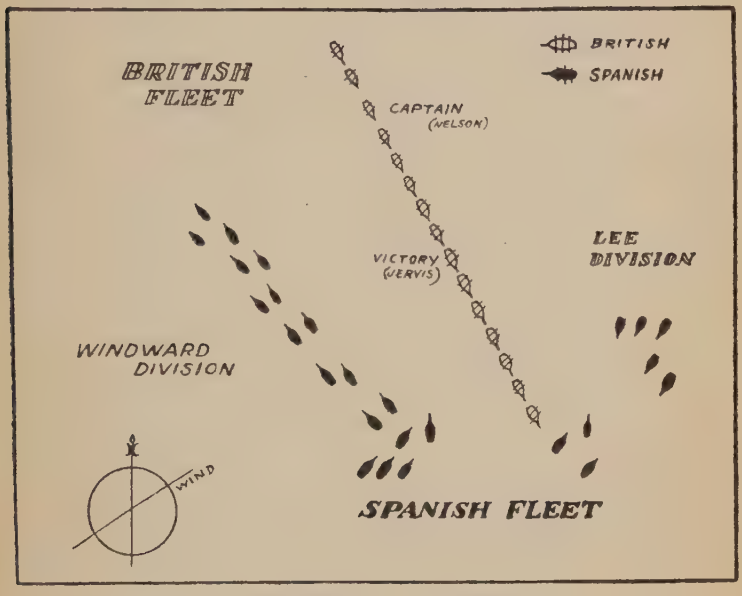
If we compare this fight with the stand of the *Revenge* we shall notice several points in common. Sir Richard Grenville's small ship fought against fantastic odds, and, like the *Content*, the *Revenge* lay becalmed while the enemy tore her to pieces at point-blank range. But while the story of Sir Richard's heroism will for ever live in English literature, the fight of the *Content* remains comparatively unknown. And though the publicity I give him at this date cannot do the bones of Nicholas Lisle much good, I am glad to have had the opportunity of adding this trifling eulogy to his memory.

In the War of 1812 the British Navy came off second-best, which is strange, seeing that this same navy bore a name for being invincible, and had in the then recent wars with France distinguished itself wherever it gave battle. Of course, the spectacular victory of the British frigate *Shannon* over the Yankee *Chesapeake* was a balm to British pride; but the fact remains that in numerous sea-duels between small ships the Yankees were more often the victors. But if it is true, as has been said, that the American men-of-war were manned mostly by British deserters, then we have the remarkable situation of British sailors beating their own people, which, if we choose to look at it in this way, is perhaps more consoling than being defeated by an alien race.

But these sloop-of-war duels of 1812 were small beer compared with the great fleet actions of Copenhagen, the Nile, St Vincent, and Trafalgar. The first two do not belong to a history of the Atlantic, and Trafalgar is well known. But the heroic battle of Cape St Vincent bears

ample proof of the prowess of the British fleet, and, incidentally, the genius of Horatio Nelson, then commodore of H.M.S. *Captain*.

On the eve of the battle of St Vincent the political situation of England was this. She stood alone against most of Europe. France, flushed with victories, was



THE BATTLE OF ST VINCENT

making great efforts to crush this country. The navies of France and Spain were about to concentrate at the mouth of the Tagus for a grand offensive against the British fleet, and Admiral Sir John Jervis, commanding the fleet at Gibraltar, was ordered to the Tagus to prevent the union of the enemy fleets. England was at that time in such a critical state, both politically and financially, that the gravest results to the country would follow the defeat of her navy. When the command from England reached Jervis his small fleet proceeded northward to cruise off the Tagus until

word was received that the enemy fleet was sailing toward Brest, when he at once stood out to meet them. Jervis had, in all, fifteen ships, the largest his own flagship, the *Victory*, 100 guns, and the smallest the *Diadem*, a sixty-four. The fleet was later increased to sixteen by the arrival of the frigate *Minerva*, with Commodore Horatio Nelson, who was ordered to hoist his flag in the *Captain*.

On the morning of February 14, 1797, the Spanish fleet, forty sail, hove in view. It was a magnificent sight, and in size, armaments, and numbers was greatly superior to the English fleet. With the *Victory* in the van Jervis's ships bore down upon the enemy, which by poor manœuvring were divided by a wide gap into two sections. By sailing close-hauled on a course south-south-west and flying the signal, "Pass through the enemy's line and engage it to leeward," the Admiral was able to gain the first advantage. Troubridge, in the *Culloden*, opened the battle by sailing down upon the foremost Spanish ship and raking her with a double-shotted broadside, putting her into such confusion that she did not return the fire.

The crews of the Spanish vessels included insufficient seamen of the right sort. They were all undertrained and largely composed of landsmen and soldiers, so that what advantage the enemy possessed in numbers was lost by the indifferent handling of the ships. Jervis had attacked the windward division of the enemy, a smart piece of strategy, since it gave him time to deal with these ships before the leeward, and larger, division could beat up to engage him. The *Principe d'Asturias* came up to the *Victory*, and, though of much greater size and weight of metal, received from Sir John such a hail of shot that she too fell into confusion and hauled out of the fray, badly damaged and demoralized. After the battle had gone on for some time, ship against ship, the enemy made a manœuvre to try to join the leeward portion of their fleet, which could not beat

THE BATTLE OF ST VINCENT

up to windward and so lend assistance. But there was one man who saw the enemy's design and determined to frustrate it if possible. This man was Nelson, in the 74-gun *Captain*, who put himself alongside the largest of the enemy ships, the 130-gun *Santísima Trinidad*. This brought four other large Spanish ships after him, and soon the *Captain* was engaged against five of the enemy. Sir John, seeing this, ordered Collingwood, in the *Excellent*, to support Nelson. Even with each other's assistance the two British ships were being fast hammered into wrecks, when Troubridge sailed down in the *Culloden* to take some of the Spanish fire. Still the British were greatly outnumbered, and, the battle having gone on for an hour, they might have been defeated had not the *Blenheim* come to their support by passing between the opposing ships, taking upon herself the storm of shot from the great battleships of the enemy, and at the same time giving the battered English ships a brief respite while fresh supplies of powder and shot were brought up to the smoking guns.

The *Blenheim* passed on, leaving the *Culloden* and the *Captain* once more exposed to the devastating broadsides from their larger opponents. Nelson's ship, the *Captain*, had suffered most, and had not Collingwood, in the *Excellent*, come down upon the *San Nicholas* and raked her fore-and-aft with two double-shotted broadsides, the *Captain* would soon have been a wreck.

The *Excellent* had already done good work in bringing about the first surrender when the *San Isidro*, a seventy-four, struck her flag to Collingwood; but he, seeing Nelson's desperate position, had not stopped to take the prize, but hurried to the assistance of the *Captain*, as we have seen.

The *San Nicholas* had been so disabled by the raking fire from the *Excellent* that she fell foul of the huge 112-gun ship *San Josef*. This was Nelson's chance to take advantage of the confusion, and he acted upon it by placing his

own wrecked ship alongside the Spaniards and pouring in what fire he could from his few undamaged guns. So badly battered was the *Captain* that her splintered masts stood unsupported, both standing and running rigging having been shot away, and so torn were her sails with shot that they were almost useless. Now Nelson, finding his ship too damaged for proper manœuvring, and being close

THE EARL OF ST VINCENT

to the enemy, laid the *Captain* alongside the *San Nicholas* to carry her by boarding in the good old-fashioned way. The manœuvre was executed with difficulty, owing to the *Captain's* wheel being shot away and her sails useless; but by making skilful use of the wind the *Captain's* sprit-sail yard was driven through the mizen shrouds of the *San Nicholas*, remaining fast there.

As the boarding party prepared to swarm over the deck of the enemy Captain Miller drew his sword and moved forward, when Nelson sprang before him saying, "No, Miller, I must have that honour." Thus, leading his

eager men, Nelson smashed in the stern windows of the *San Nicholas* with his sword hilt and entered the cabin with a crowd of boarders behind him, every man eager to meet the enemy. They had no taste for cold steel, and the mob of yelling British sailors swept forward in such a fierce rush that there was no withstanding them. As Nelson led his men through the cabins and up on to the deck, his lieutenant, Edward Berry, at the head of another boarding party, dropped from the sprit-sail yard on to the Spaniard's poop. At first the Spanish officers barricaded themselves and replied with a rain of musket-fire; but the horde of Englishmen, brandishing cutlasses and yelling like Indians, drove the enemy to take refuge where they could or cut them down. The young lieutenant had cleared the poop, and the Spanish captain, who was mortally wounded, surrendered his sword to the commodore, who had come up from the quarterdeck, where his men were still fighting the little groups of the enemy who were spirited enough to resist to the last. Nelson received the swords of the Spanish officers, and then took measures to safeguard the prize. Such a precaution was necessary when some desperate prisoner might be hiding below to fire the magazine. Also the ship herself was in immediate need of the carpenters' attention, as she was holed below water.

Meanwhile, the *San Josef*, though sorely crippled by the fire from the *Excellent*, began to pour shot into the *Captain*, thus further embarrassing Nelson, who had been too occupied in taking the *San Nicholas* to notice that the other Spanish ship had drifted down to him. The *Captain* was already so crippled as to be almost useless, and the only alternative to a fight was to place the prize between himself and his attackers; but Nelson chose the more desperate course—to accept a fight. Since his ship was too damaged to be of much use as a fighting unit, the commodore resorted to his old tactics of coming alongside the enemy and

boarding her. From the decks of the prize the little commodore swarmed up the lofty sides of the *San Josef* with his men, and shouted words that have since become classical, "Westminster Abbey or victory!"

The *San Josef* surrendered almost without resistance, and so it came about that one man and his crew, by their irresistible dash, had captured two large ships and made their crews prisoners. On the quarterdeck of the *San Josef* Nelson stood bareheaded, receiving the swords of the Spanish officers, which he passed at once to an old tar,

who, in Southey's words, "bundled them under his arm as if they were a bundle of faggots."

Now the fight was over the commodore found that his own ship, the *Captain*, was too badly battered to be of further use to him, and so transferred his flag first to *La Minerve*, and later to the *Irresistible*. Prize crews were put in the captured ships, and the wrecked *Captain* was allowed to drift clear of the *San Nicholas*.

While the foregoing concerns mainly the exploits of Nelson, Jervis had, of course, been busy commanding the main operations. His responsibility was enormous, for, should the lee division of the enemy fleet be able to beat up to windward and join their own distressed ships, matters might not go so well with the English. Watching the approaching enemy through his glass, the Admiral signalled his forces to form in line ahead and wait for the Spaniards. This determined stand of the smaller fleet, grimly waiting the attack, cooled the ardour of the enemy, for shortly afterward he was seen to retire. While Nelson had been engaged the old Admiral himself had been in the

thick of an action with the huge 112-gun ship *Salvador del Mundo*, which, after a short and bloody fight, he took as prize.

From midday till five o'clock the battle lasted, and when at last the Spaniards clapped on all sail in full retreat they left four of their finest men-of-war with the victors. When Nelson went on board the *Victory* to make his report the stern old Admiral was so moved by Nelson's success, which had contributed so largely to the victory, that he embraced him before all the officers and crew, and in so far unbending showed an affection for Nelson that he gave to very few men.

While the *débris* and disorder of battle was being cleared up in prize and victor alike the enemy, having sailed beyond the horizon, re-formed, and next day were seen, twenty-two sail, advancing to renew the attack. But when they saw Jervis's ships once more awaiting them in line of battle they thought better of it and withdrew, this time for good. When the news was brought to England it had an electrical effect upon the country. A black menace was destroyed, and a grateful people felt that nothing was too good for the victorious leaders. Jervis was created an earl and granted a pension of £3000 a year, while Nelson received the Order of the Bath and promotion to Rear-Admiral.

CHAPTER VII

The Sailing Packets

After steam had ousted sailing-ships from the seas the word 'clipper' fell into desuetude, and it is only during the past decade—that is, since the Great War—that the landsman has begun to take an interest in the golden age of sail. We realize we have lost something, and a hundred writers of books have tried partially to make good the loss by chronicling the feats of fast clippers and writing histories of the sailing-ships. The Seven Seas had each its particular type of square-rigged craft, or at least its particular kind of ocean commerce; and the nature of the cargoes had a very marked influence on the type of ships seen on the different oceans. First-class passenger traffic required fast ships with graceful lines, but purely cargo-vessels, when time was of little importance, were designed with an eye to carrying capacity rather than to speed. This does not mean that cargo-carrying ships were always bluff in the bows and wide in the beam, for some cargoes were sufficiently valuable to justify sacrificing capacity for speed. The tea, for example, which was destined for Victorian tables was rushed home from China in ships built like yachts. Tea was expensive, and a protracted

voyage in a slow vessel would do it no good, so the tea-clippers were rated among the finest sailing-ships in the world. The cargo justified the employment of the best ships.

During the sailing-ship era gradually each trade route brought into being its own class of vessel, until any deep-water sailor could tell at a glance in what trade a vessel was engaged. There were the East Indiamen, conservative in design and kept like men-of-war. They were followed by their successors, the Blackwall frigates, which sailed out of London River, and were noticeable for their flat sheer-line and painted ports. These, in turn, were succeeded by the wool-clippers and tea-clippers for Australia and China. Then there were the bluff-built barques, the Sou' Spainers, which wallowed through the Bay of Biscay, and the collier brigs in the North Sea. On the American side of the Atlantic were the rakish topsail schooners that are so famous as the Baltimore clippers, the forerunners of the fast Atlantic sailing packets, and the Cape Horn clippers taking emigrants to California and bringing back alluvial gold. This is apart from the South Sea whalers, the sealing vessels, the ' blue-nose ' ships from Nova Scotia, and a score of others.

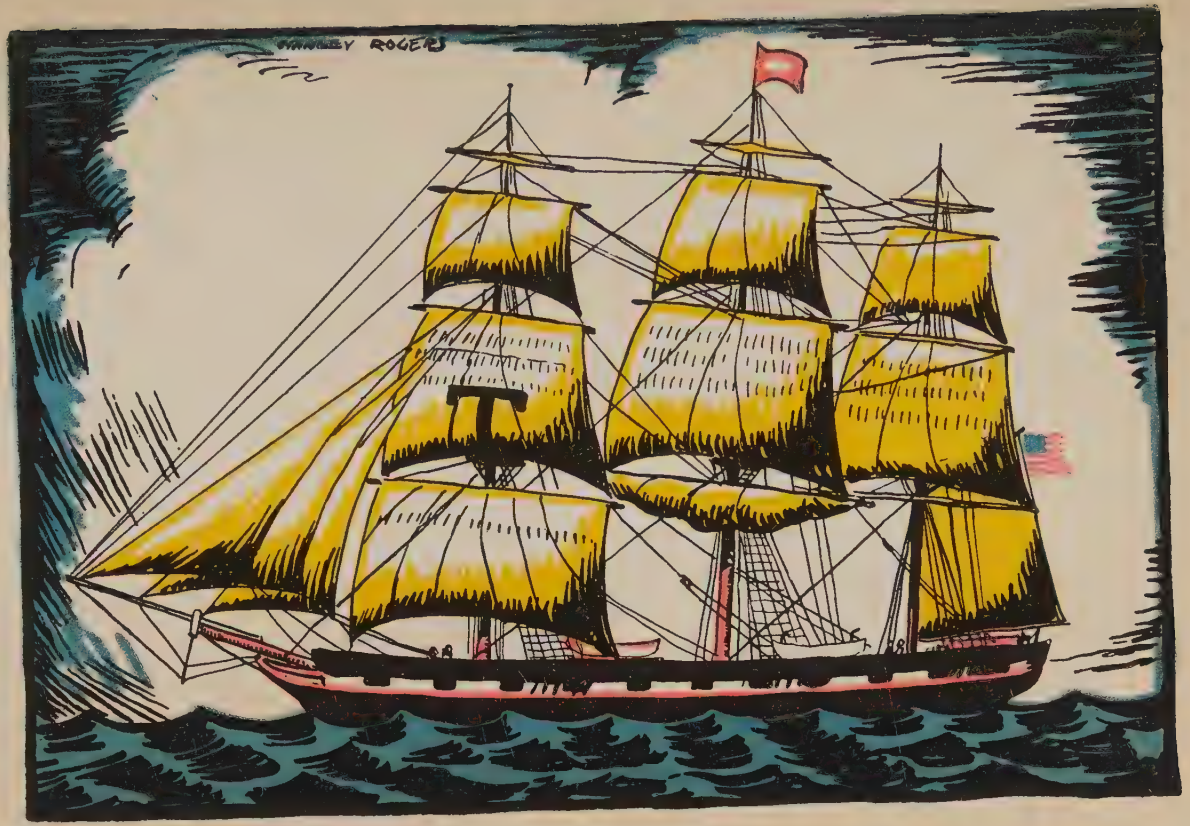
Until, let us say, 1840 the Atlantic crossing was a formidable undertaking. The prospect of weeks of discomfort on a rolling ship did not appeal to the landsman, and a voyage to America—such a luxurious and simple experience to-day—was then only undertaken by adventurers and emigrants and those whose special business carried them thither. But with the coming of the clippers, the sailing greyhounds which reduced the passage to something near two weeks, passenger traffic increased, and people even made the crossing ' for their health.' These clippers were known as packets, and inaugurated a regular service from Liverpool to American and Canadian ports.

When the clipper-ship was at the height of its glory steamships were in their infancy, and for forty years the history of sail and steam on the Atlantic overlaps. For a while, in the sixties, sail and steam ran an even race until steam gradually forged ahead and left sail fading away into the mists of time.

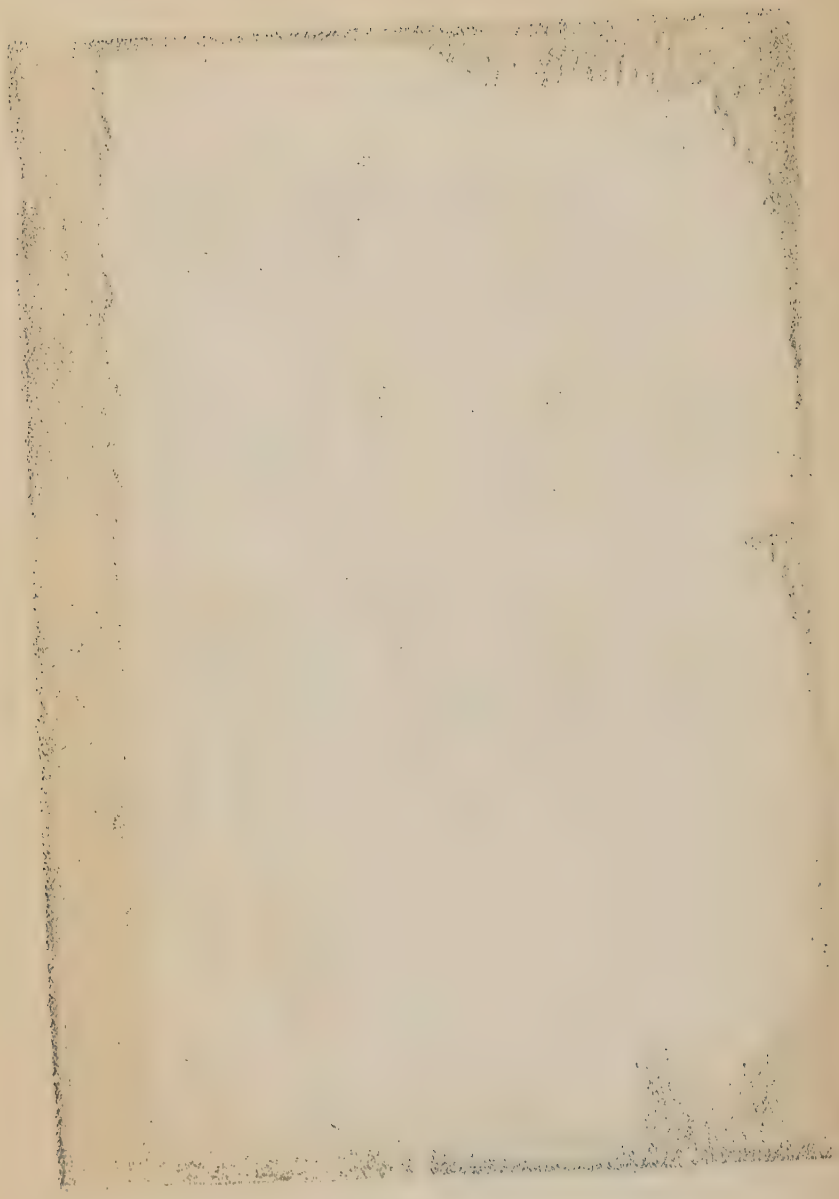
The first of the famous packet lines sailing between Liverpool and New York was the Black Ball Line, immortalized for us in the chanty *Blow the Man Down*. The

line was instituted in 1815. The average length of time for the passage was twenty-three days running east and forty days running west, which is, incidentally, a significant comment on the power of the prevailing westerly winds. They sailed regularly on the first of the month, regardless of bad weather, which had always been the governing factor with the old " weather permitting " sailing packets, and they were driven across with all they could carry by their hard-case officers and well-trained crews. The first four ships of the Black Ball Line were the *Courier*, *Amity*, *Pacific*, and *James Monroe*, all 500-ton ships—small vessels compared with the iron clippers which were to come later.

The early Black Ballers, as they were called, were crowded



AN ATLANTIC PACKET



ships, with every inch of space utilized for passengers and cargo. Even the long-boat, lashed right side up amidships, was employed as a sort of Noah's Ark with pens for pigs and sheep, fowls, ducks, and geese. Over the main hatch was secured a house for the cows, which were milked twice daily by a sort of marine cowherd. Steerage passengers lived and ate on deck whenever the weather permitted, since the salubrity of their quarters below was not all that could be desired. Naturally the presence of so many passengers eating and lounging about the deck interfered to a certain extent with the work of the crew, but it was an evil that had no remedy until the number and size of sailing-ships increased to cope with the growing demand for accommodation.

The Black Ball Line ships were distinguished by a large disc like a black moon painted low down on the fore topsail. Other famous pioneer lines were the Red Star, the Dramatic Line, the Swallow-tail Line, Train's Liverpool Line, the ships of which carried a large black T on the fore topsail, the Black Star Line, the Patriotic Line, the Black X Line, and the St George's Cross Line, to which belonged the immortal clipper *Dreadnought*, the "Wild Boat of the Atlantic." This ship had an interesting history, and lithographs of her were very popular in the printshops of the day. Her fighting skipper, Captain Samuels, literally lived up to the old sailor's boast, "What she can't carry she can drag," and the life of the crew on board her was a hard one.

One of the most talked-of mutinies on the high seas took place on the *Dreadnought*[1] when Captain Samuels signed on a notorious gang of Liverpool Irishmen known as the "Bloody Forty," who conspired to satisfy an old grudge against the iron-willed skipper. Nothing more than a few cracked heads came of it, but had Captain Samuels been

[1] Told in the author's *Ships and Sailors* (Harrap).

less alert and less resolute in dealing with the mutineers, murder would have been done and the ship perhaps lost.

In the year 1859 the *Dreadnought* made the record passage, for sail, from Sandy Hook to Liverpool of nine days seventeen hours—a fine performance which made this ship the most famous Western Ocean clipper of her day. Her fast passages were not due so much to any special virtue of the vessel herself, for she was strongly built and by no means as graceful as some of her sister-ships, but because Captain Samuels was a 'cracker on' who drove

his ship for all she was worth. The crews of other vessels who spoke the *Dreadnought* during a passage would tell of how she bucked the seas, throwing water over her bows and showing her keel as she lifted to the Atlantic rollers—a wild boat indeed.

Another famous Atlantic clipper was the *Great Republic*, built in 1853 by Donald McKay. She was for a long time the largest sailing-ship in the world. Over 4500 tons burden and 335 feet in length, she was so big that her spars towered high over the tallest buildings on the New York water-front—then, not now. She was barque-rigged, and carried double topsail yards. Her beginning was marked by a misfortune that nearly ended her career before it had begun. While alongside the fitting-out dock when almost ready for her maiden voyage she caught fire, and, as the blaze had got beyond control, in order to save her she was scuttled in ten feet of water. This did not, how-

ever, extinguish the flames on her upper decks, and she burned until the fire reached the water's edge.

The fire had started by sparks falling on the ship from a warehouse which was burning near by. The flames ran up the well-tarred rigging of the ship, licking up the sails as if they were paper. So lofty were her spars that the New York firemen could not reach them with the water, and, in an effort to save the ship, her masts and rigging were cut away. This was dangerous work, for as the spars went over the side into the dock they crushed boats, deck-houses, and railings, and the firemen refused to play their hoses from the deck of the ship itself for fear of the danger from falling blocks from above. The mizen-mast, when it was cut away, did not go over the side, but pierced three decks, the blazing lower end starting a fire below which burned for two days. Afterward she was floated and sold to another firm, who towed the sorry hulk of a once magnificent ship to a shipyard, where they set about rebuilding her. After a year had passed she reappeared, rebuilt and looking as impressive as when she was first launched, except for the fact that her new masts were less lofty and her tonnage had been reduced to 3357 tons. When she reached London from New York on her first voyage she had to lie in the Thames, as no dock was large enough to receive her. After many vicissitudes she met her end in 1869 during a hurricane off Bermuda, while sailing light from Rio to St John, New Brunswick.

The *Sovereign of the Seas*, another one of Donald McKay's creations, was advertised as the fastest ship in the world. Her record time from New York to Liverpool was quoted as 13 days, 22 hours. This was in 1853, when she

raced the Cunard paddle-wheel steamer *Canada* across the Atlantic, beating the steamer by passing Queenstown several hours ahead of her. The handsome clipper *Redjacket*, launched at Rockland, Maine, in 1854, was another famous Atlantic packet which ensured for herself a place high up in the sailing-ships' Valhalla by making several record passages.

It is difficult to say which was the fastest ship that ever sailed, for so many claim that honour. England had the *Thermopylæ* and the *Cutty Sark*, but America also claimed several 'world's fastest ships.' The *Flying Cloud*, the *Sovereign of the Seas*, and the *Lightning* were each advertised as such. But they could not all occupy a pinnacle designed to hold but one. Which was actually the fastest does not matter so much, since some were faster on a short run, while others made better time on a long passage, and nothing is gained by the comparison. But undoubtedly the *Lightning*, another of the masterpieces of that genius Donald McKay, stood among the few in point of speed, and her record for a single day's run—436 miles—remains unbeaten to this day, and not until thirty years later was this record excelled by a steamer. The run was made in 1854, when the *Lightning* sailed across the Atlantic to Liverpool to be put into the Australian trade by the British shipowner James Baines, who had bought her.

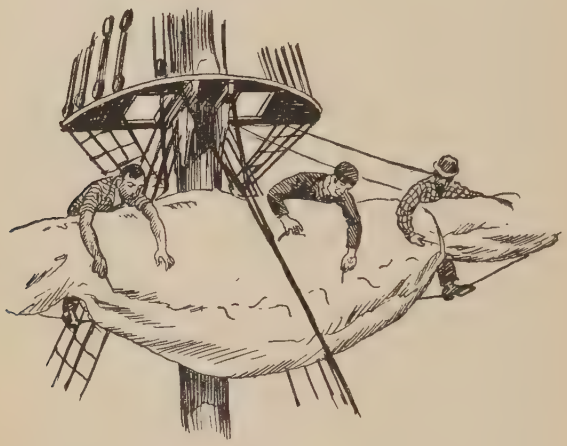
Another transatlantic record-breaker was the *James Baines*, also built by Donald McKay. On her maiden passage to Liverpool from Boston in 1854 she was at sea twelve days and six hours! This ship, like the *Lightning*, was put into the Australian trade. The fame of American-designed clippers had spread to Europe, and often, against much patriotic opposition at home, English shipowners bought American vessels. The most famous of all the transatlantic shipbuilders was Donald McKay, who, though born in Nova Scotia, made his name in New England,

where, at East Boston, he built some of the finest clippers that ever sailed. Among these were the *Flying Cloud*, *Sovereign of the Seas*, *Great Republic*, *Lightning*, *Flying Fish*, *Daniel Webster*, *Empress of the Sea*, *James Baines*, *Jenny Lind*, *Reindeer*, *Glory of the Seas*, *Cornelius Grinnell*, *Westward Ho!*, *Bald Eagle*, *Romance of the Seas*, and the *Stag Hound*, surely a remarkable record for one man. Unfortunately, few of these ships entered the Atlantic ferry service, most of them being built for the California and China trade, doing fast passages down the Atlantic and round the Horn into the Pacific in the days when the Panama Canal was no more than a dream.

How entirely different was the personnel of the sailing packets from the liners of to-day! The old Western Ocean hard-case officer and packet-rat are an extinct race. They are as dead as the mastodon and the dinosaur. Modern trade unions and seamen's societies would not tolerate the state of affairs that existed at sea when Victoria was a young queen. Passengers crossing the Atlantic in the early packets often had the strange experience of seeing men knocked down by their officers, and of sometimes becoming unwilling onlookers at an incipient mutiny when the afterguard (*i.e.*, the officers) found themselves called upon to take part in a fight on deck, laying about with belaying-pins and marling-spikes with all the ferocity of awakened tigers.

The packets were driven, not sailed in a leisurely fashion, and lazy, inefficient crews were not tolerated on these smart ships. It was the finest school in the world for seamen, but the hardest, and no place for weaklings. The worst characters often made the best seamen, but such men

needed an iron hand to rule them, especially when passengers were carried. These seamen were only amenable to discipline of the harshest kind, and took any show of humanity as weakness. Like the Alaskan sledge-dogs, they respected a club and nothing else. Much criticism has been made against the man-eating mates of the packet ships for their brutality, and it must have shocked the landsman passenger on his first day at sea to notice an



officer's manner of addressing the men, snapping out commands in a voice that would make that of a company sergeant-major sound gentle in comparison. And if the command was not obeyed instantly it would be followed by a vicious kick from a heavy sea-boot or a blow from Mr Mate's clenched fist. Imagine such a happening on, say, the *Mauretania*. The officer would have to explain himself in court. And this is quite right, of course. But *autres temps, autres mœurs*, and no amount of idealistic theories will alter the fact that the packet-rats were hopeless and beyond redemption. They were untamable, and the officers had no choice but to meet brutality with brutality.

I should not care to give the impression that all packet-ship's crews were of this type. Some clippers were happy ships with a self-respecting crowd forward, men who saved their money and lived decently when ashore; but this was the exception rather than the rule.

In the fifties passenger accommodation was more restricted than in these days of 900-foot ships and large promenade decks. Even the first-cabin passengers, of which there were seldom more than a score carried on a passage, were forced to live in closer intimacy with the crew than do the steerage of to-day. Not that that did the former any harm, but it is obvious that for the safety of both passengers and ship a despotic rule was necessary.

Nowadays all manner of diversions are provided on board steamers for the passengers, but in the sailing packets the traveller was left largely to his own devices, and his manner of spending his waking hours was much less sophisticated than it would be now. In fine weather he strolled about the confined space of the quarterdeck, or sat on uncomfortable skylight seats, reading or perhaps holding polite and stilted conversation with some crinolined lady passenger, or, if there was deck space, playing shuffle-board. Sometimes a fiddler in the crew, sitting on the capstan-head, would scrape a lively tune while decorous maidens and side-whiskered men would dance the polka or a waltz. In the ladies' saloon in the evening they would perhaps sit down to a thrilling game of backgammon, but the men —wild fellows!—played cards, whist, bezique, or lost their money to some Yankee traveller who beguiled them by teaching them poker.

And what of the catering on these packets? It is hardly necessary to say that it would not satisfy the Epicurean voyager of to-day. Fresh bread was unknown: in its place was the traditional ship's biscuit, perhaps of a little finer quality than that supplied to the fo'c'sle, but

biscuit, hard-tack, nothing more. Salt pork, ham, dried fruit, salt fish, and Scotch porridge were the staple foods. Molasses was used for sweetening the heavy dumplings served for dessert, and by the sailors for sweetening their

tea. This fare may seem barbaric, but it is safe to say that if the traveller was seasick Lucullus himself could not have tempted him to eat, and if the traveller was well the sea air gave him an appetite that made the stodgiest dumpling that was ever ruined by a poor cook taste like ambrosia.

The rest of the arrangements for the passenger's comfort were equally crude. Fresh-water baths were unknown, for every passenger had an allowance of water (usually one gallon) each day, which he had to make the best of. The water-supply of the ship, carried in an iron tank standing on the keelson amidships, was pumped up daily and measured by the carpenter, who was responsible for its distribution. To waste water was the crime of crimes at sea.

The price of a first-class passage with the accommodation described above ran to somewhere about £25, which was £15 cheaper than on the early steamers. Over and above this was the cost of tips, which was an evil existing then as it does now.

The steerage cost £4, and on the western passage the packets were crowded with emigrants from all over Europe hurrying to the Land of Promise. There were no strict emigration laws then, and many of the emigrants were from the scum of Europe. They lived like animals in their quarters below decks, and were respected neither by the officers nor by the crew. Rations were given them once a week, according to the law, which placed the amount to be expended on food at tenpence a day per head. In heavy weather the poor wretches were kept below, where they lay terrified, not unlike the black slaves in the slaving-ship days, living, or dying, in the semi-darkness, the fetid atmosphere, and the stench of seasickness. There was no cook for the emigrants, and those who were well enough had to cook their own food at a small galley provided for them, and if the ship was crowded with several hundred of these poor travellers many had to wait hours for their chance to make a hot drink. As the galley was on deck, when the weather was really bad it was impossible to do any cooking, and they had to take their food cold or go without. The accommodation for them below decks was

so devoid of comfort, and the place so foul, that it frequently resembled the Black Hole of Calcutta. The bunks were mere shelves of rough boards in tiers of three within a height of six feet—the height between decks—and these 'berths' were in rows three feet apart. These narrow alleyways were crowded with men, women, and children, many of them ill, with their provisions and luggage, all in the semi-darkness, for the only light came from one or two smoky oil-lamps swinging from a beam above. People were sick, men quarrelled, babies were born, and people died or broke their hearts down in these foul and gloomy quarters, but the ship sailed on, and those who came through the ordeal landed in the New World, where they lived and became the grandparents of half of the Americans of to-day.

The young republic was growing and needing settlers, and the packet-ship companies filled their vessels on every western passage. Several hundred people packed together below decks gave the ship's officers cause for anxiety, and the carpenter was usually called at least once during a passage to put out a fire started below by some careless emigrant or by men fighting and upsetting a lamp. The risk of fire was always greater than any danger from the ship running into a heavy gale, but when a vessel did founder in a gale loss of life was inevitable, since there were never enough lifeboats to accommodate every one on board.

One of Donald McKay's ships, the *Daniel Webster*, figured in 1851 in a dramatic rescue at sea, when, five days out from Boston eastward bound, she came upon the ship *Unicorn*, which had been dismasted while on a passage from Ireland to St John's. When the people in the *Daniel Webster* sighted the wreck a brig was also seen standing by, the brig having taken off as many of the *Unicorn's* passengers as she could safely carry. The *Unicorn*, a small

A SAILING PACKET

ship, was crowded with emigrants, and they could be seen huddled together in pathetic groups on the part of the deck still above water. Such a high sea was running that the captain of the *Daniel Webster* had the greatest difficulty in bringing his ship down to the wreck, which appeared as if it would founder before the people could be taken off. When two boats from the clipper were got into the water and rowed to within hailing distance of the sinking ship the seas were too high to permit them coming close enough to receive the survivors. A great number of the passengers had already perished in the sea; their bodies floated so thickly that the rescuers had to be careful to avoid running them down. The captain of the *Daniel Webster*, who commanded one of the boats, shouted to the people on the wreck to jump into the sea and they would be picked up. There was no other course, and many who dared not jump were thrown into the sea; and by these desperate means 200 people were picked up and safely taken on board the clipper. But even then their troubles were not ended, for on the now overcrowded ship they were confronted with the peril of starvation. The *Daniel Webster*, like so many packets of those days, did not carry a reserve supply of food, and the presence of two hundred extra people gave the captain a problem that seemed at first to have no solution. There were just sufficient provisions for the regular crew and passengers, and to distribute this food among the emigrants would mean famine for every one. But the problem was solved when some one thought of the cargo. The ship carried a cargo of corn-meal, and this, when boiled and doled out from tubs, was eaten gladly by

the half-starved people, who were all finally landed in England and sent to their homes.

Another instance of this fatal parsimony in not equipping ships with sufficient boats was the loss of the clipper *Staffordshire* on the rocks near Cape Sable in December 1854, when only forty-four out of 214 people were saved. The *Staffordshire*, which, because of her beauty of line, was known as "the Queen Clipper of the Atlantic," left Liverpool for Boston on December 9, 1854, with a large number of emigrants on board. For the first twenty days the weather was fine and the seas smooth, but on December 29 the ship ran into a snow-storm, which decreased visibility to a few cable-lengths. On December 30 she struck on what was later identified as Blonde Rock, near Sea Islands, which lie off Cape Sable. After striking she slipped off into deep water and began to sink. The mate tried to beach her, but the tiller gear broke, and the ship became unmanageable. The boats were dropped into the water, and all the women and children were put into them, but when they were already dangerously overloaded many poor wretches in the water grasped the gunwales, begging to be saved. Those in the boats, to save themselves from being swamped, were forced to the inhuman necessity of pushing off those who so pitifully tried to be saved.

Captain Richardson lay in his bunk with an injured back, due to a fall, and when the ship struck the mate wanted to have him carried on deck and placed in one of the boats, but he refused this privilege and so went down with the ship.

The march of progress has removed most of the dangers of an Atlantic passage, so much so in fact that to speak of danger in such a connexion sounds absurd. We do not think of dangers when we step upon the broad decks of the *Olympic*. There are sufficient lifeboats, and every

passenger has over his berth the comforting life-jackets, ready for instant use. Everything is done for his safety —double bottoms, watertight bulkhead doors, fire-alarms, fire-control systems, patent davits for lifeboats, and, best of all, the wireless, which at the first sign of danger can bring all ships within a radius of a thousand miles hurrying to the rescue.

Yet who does not deplore the passing of the glorious old Atlantic sailing packets, for with all their disadvantages they were the most lovely things created by man?

CHAPTER VIII

The Steam Ferry

In the days of sail the Atlantic crossing was a leisurely business, occupying weeks or even months. To the emigrant it was the adventure of a lifetime, a long voyage [1] fraught with unknown perils, and, at best, accompanied by a certain amount of physical hardship. There was no regular service across, and sailings were few and far between. In the forties, fifties, and sixties the famous clipper lines had, of course, a regular sailing schedule; but, strictly speaking, it was the arrival of steam, the despised 'steam kettles,' that made the passage so safe and so regular that it became little more than a ferry across a very wide river —like a shuttle, back and forth—a fortnight out, a fortnight back, with a week at each end between crossings.

The coming of steam sounded the death-knell of the magnificent clipper fleet; for, though they held their own for some years—even at first exceeding, in point of speed, the steamships—sail could not last against the march of steam. Steamers disregarded the weather, and slowly overhauled their graceful rivals, pushing them off the seas—we fear for ever.

The first practical steam-driven vessel was probably Fulton's *Clermont*, which wheezed its way down the Hudson in 1807; but so feeble were the infant steamers that it was not until twelve years later that one of them ventured to

[1] Properly a voyage is a double journey; the single crossing is a passage.

cross the Atlantic. This historic craft was the *Savannah*, an American side-paddle-wheel ship. She was really sail-*cum*-steam, for she was originally a full-rigged ship, and had had engines, boilers, and paddles installed. This was in 1819, when sail was still the only serious means of ship-propulsion. The *Savannah* left the port of Savannah on May 26, 1819, and reached Liverpool on June 20, a

THE "SAVANNAH"

passage of thirty-five days. On seventeen of these days sail alone was used, for the eighty tons of coal in her bunkers had to be husbanded when the winds were fair. Her reception in England was not cordial. The naval authorities disliked steam vessels, and in some quarters this ambitious move of the United States was looked upon with suspicion. As the *Savannah* approached the Mersey she was taken to be a ship on fire, and cutters were rushed out to her aid.

Thirty-five days! Compare that with the clipper *Dreadnought's* nine and a half days from New York to Queenstown

in 1858. When the *Savannah* used sail her huge paddle-wheels were unshipped, a heavy job that occupied considerable time; but to allow them to remain in the water would have seriously impeded progress under sail. Her speed under steam alone was six knots. The *Savannah* had no rivals, and for many years after she was wrecked in 1822 the Atlantic remained in the possession of sail. Then, in 1833, there came from Quebec the *Royal William*, to take up the gauntlet flung down by the *Savannah*. Wisely

THE "ETRURIA"

the month of August was chosen for the inaugural trip, and it was accomplished without incident in forty-one days, Quebec to Gravesend. This vessel is not to be confused with another *Royal William* built in Liverpool in 1838 and sent across to New York. This latter embodied many innovations, including the first watertight bulkheads. Her tonnage was 617, and she was rated at 540 horse-power. The passage across cost 140 dollars, which included food and wine.

Steam had invaded the Atlantic and had come to stay. From now onward people began to take steamships seriously, though for some decades they were to carry sail—a *sine qua non*. Even the liners of the eighties were described as 'schooner-rigged.' The *Teutonic* (1889) and the *Majestic* (1890) were actually rigged as three-masted

schooners, so strong is custom. The present writer remembers seeing, as a child, at the Prince's Landing Stage, Liverpool, the Cunarder *Etruria*, barque-rigged! Yet the hull and upper decks of the *Etruria* were of modern-liner design—that is, a straight stem, long, overhanging counter, sheltered promenade decks, row of lifeboats, ventilators, high bridge, and so forth. On top of this spreading yards seem incongruous. The *Etruria* was built in 1885.

To return to the beginnings of the ferry service, in the forties steamers were never absent from the Atlantic. So far only the Americans had sent steamers across, but in 1838 came the *Sirius*, the first British steamship to make the voyage. She deserves our notice. Seven hundred tons burden, with two twenty-four-foot paddle-wheels, one long funnel, and rigged as a three-masted topsail schooner, her first passage was dogged by ill-fortune. The constant head-winds and a mutinous crew gave the officers a great deal of trouble and anxiety. The crew had to be threatened with firearms to induce them to work; but, despite these troubles, a record passage (for steam) of eighteen and a half days was made. Following the *Sirius* came the *Great Western*, of Bristol, in the same year, with a passage of thirteen and a half days. At thirteen hundred odd tons she was described as a "huge vessel."

The success of the *Sirius* and the *Great Western* encouraged others. There was the *British Queen* and the *President*, named no doubt as a gesture of respect to the two rulers. The latter carried the distinction and melancholy fame of being the first steamer to be lost on the Atlantic. It is this same *President* that figures so prominently among the mysteries of the sea, for she disappeared somewhere between the Mersey and the Hudson after leaving Liverpool on July 17, 1840.[1] She was never heard of again, nor was any wreckage ever found. A complete,

[1] Told by the author in *Ships and Sailors* (Harrap).

unfathomable mystery! One hundred and thirty people were on board when she was lost.

I believe the first screw-steamer to cross the Western Ocean was the *Great Britain*, a big ship for her day. Built of iron, she was 322 feet long, and over 3000 tons register. Her engines were of the old inverted diagonal type, her four cylinders giving 1500 horse-power. Launched in July 1843, she was held up for nearly a year through the dock-gates being too narrow for her beam. A curious oversight on the part of the builders, it would seem.

THE "BRITANNIA"

However, this difficulty was surmounted, and the *Great Britain* made her maiden trip in July 1845. After having her engines replaced by an improved pattern and her rigging and sail plan altered, she went into the Australian trade until 1882, when, again rerigged, this time as a full-rigged ship, she put into Port Stanley, Falkland Islands, so badly leaking that she was left there to rot as a coal hulk.

The next step in this epitome of steamship history is the arrival of the big steamer lines, some of which exist to the present day. In the year 1839 there arrived in England an astute Canadian who was destined to give his name to the greatest steamship company ever formed. This unknown man's name was Samuel Cunard. With two partners he formed the Cunard Line to run a steam-packet service from Liverpool to Halifax and Boston. Four steamers were built, all alike in design and size.

Their tonnage was about 1100. The first and most famous of these four ships was the *Britannia*, a paddle-wheeler. The *Britannia* is the vessel that was the centre of interest during the great frost in Boston in the winter of 1844. In the Macpherson Collection recently presented to the nation is a very interesting coloured print of the incident. The *Britannia* when ready to sail (or should we say 'steam'?) with the mails was found to be completely frozen in. There was over six feet of ice round the ship, and Boston Harbour was frozen for a distance of seven miles toward the sea. The wise citizens of Boston, knowing that the holding up of the mails by ice would not enhance the reputation of their port, set to work, and within two days had cut a canal, seven miles long and a hundred feet wide, through which the British steamer was able to steam to the sea. Once in the open Atlantic she made a safe passage, reaching England but two days late.

The Cunard Company grew prosperous, and entirely justified the faith of the Government, which had subsidized it to the extent of £60,000. But the Company was conservative, and in this respect was the last steamship line to drop the use of the obsolete paddle-wheels. The *Scotia*, built in 1862, was the last of the Atlantic paddle-steamers.

Long before that, as we have seen, the screw propeller had proved its virtues. The paddles and paddle-boxes were unwieldy affairs, liable to be smashed up in heavy seas, and, of course, they required far more engine-power to work them in ratio to the ship's speed than the neat little screw tucked safely away under the vessel's counter. In spite of the proven superiority of the screw, the leviathan *Great Eastern*, built in 1858, was fitted with paddle-wheels as well as a propeller. Her paddles were enormous, and even her screw was a formidable piece of machinery. To the past generation, and to many now living, the *Great Eastern* was one of the seven wonders of the modern world.

Certainly she was the most remarkable craft that ever crossed the Atlantic. She was as out of her time as a skyscraper would have been in the eighteenth century. She was a giant among pygmies, and since she never paid for her upkeep the opprobrious title 'white elephant' is particularly apt. Brunel, her builder, dreamed of a ship large enough to carry its own coal supply to Australia and

THE "GREAT EASTERN"

back, so he made her 680 feet long, with a beam of 83 feet. Misfortune hung over her from the day when she stuck on the launching ways. As a passenger vessel she was a failure, and her only useful work was when she carried in her enormous holds 3000 miles of cable, the first, across the Atlantic. After making herself unpopular at various ports, where her great size was more of a nuisance than a blessing, she was sold in 1890, for a paltry few thousand pounds, to be broken up on the banks of the Mersey. But her name will for ever live in history of the Atlantic as being for many years the largest vessel in the world. From the decks of the little steamers of those days, vessels the size of a small cross-Channel steamer, the

sight of the *Great Eastern* at sea must have been a memorable experience, like the first sight of a mountain to a plainsman, or like some vast apparition rising out of the sea. Even the modern leviathans of the Atlantic have not far outstripped that Victorian giant in point of size. The *Great Eastern* was not, of course, connected with the Cunard Line.

This company continued to flourish and to build ships —the *Servia* (1881), the first Atlantic greyhound; the twin vessels *Umbria* and *Etruria* (1884 and 1885), which were the fastest ships of their day; the famous *Campania* and *Lucania* of the nineties, also greyhounds; and then the blue-ribbon ships *Mauretania* and the ill-starred *Lusitania*.

The principal rivals of the Cunard ships in the early days were the vessels of the Collins Line, an American company founded in 1848. Its steamers bore names ending in *ic*—*Arctic*, *Baltic*, *Atlantic*, and *Pacific*. This last-named suffered a similar fate to that of the *President*, inasmuch as somewhere between Liverpool and New York in the year 1856 she disappeared, never to be heard of again. Her loss remains a mystery to the present day.

The famous Inman, Allan, and Anchor Lines had their birth in the fifties. The Inman Line named their steamers after cities; thus, *City of Glasgow*, *City of Manchester*, *City of Philadelphia*, *City of Brussels*, *City of Paris*, and so on. The *City of Glasgow*, like the *President* and the *Pacific*, was mysteriously lost with all hands. Indeed, the list of vessels " sunk without a trace " is larger than one might suppose. It seems incredible, but actually out of the 120 odd steamers lost on the Atlantic between the years 1840 and 1892 twenty-four disappeared as completely as if they had never existed at all. The cases of the *Huronian* on the Atlantic in 1902 and the *Waratah* in the Indian Ocean in 1909 are comparatively recent instances of mysterious ship disappearances. One or two such occurrences in a century would be remarkable enough, but notice that on the Atlantic

alone there was, over a period of fifty-two years, an average of one ship disappearance approximately every two years. Ship, cargo, crew, and passengers swallowed up, disappeared into the blue! Little wonder there are still people afraid of the sea!

The Inman Line owned those two interesting and famous vessels, the *City of New York* and the *City of Paris*, twin-screw steamers, schooner-rigged, three funnels (black with white band below the top), bowsprit, and clipper bows. A distinguishing feature of these vessels, apart from their three funnels and clipper bows, was the prominent arched and glass-covered roof of the large first-class dining-saloon just forward of the bridge.

From Glasgow came the Anchor Line in 1856, with steamers sailing to New York. Two years before that a Scotch Canadian, Hugh Allan, afterward Sir Hugh, founded the Allan Line with ships sailing from Liverpool for Quebec and Montreal.

In 1884 the *America*, a two-funnelled, clipper-built steamer of 5528 tons belonging to the National Line, startled Atlantic shipping circles by doing the ' run ' in 6 days 14 hours, a record that long stood unbeaten, until the Cunarders started breaking records in the late eighties.

The White Star Line, which shares honours with the Cunard Line, came into being in 1870. The name White Star Line was taken from the earlier clipper line of that name. It immediately adopted the custom of bestowing upon all its ships names ending in *ic*—*Oceanic*, *Atlantic*, *Arctic*, etc. Some of the early White Star steamers which became famous were the *Oceanic*, the *Britannic*, and the *Germanic*. The last two, built in 1874–75, were rigged as four-masted barques, the two funnels being set between the main- and mizen-masts. These vessels made some very fast passages, the *Britannic* averaging as much as sixteen knots during a passage. The steamship had

THE STEAM FERRY

definitely beaten the sailing clipper. No clipper could cross in seven days; but in the eighties the passage was frequently made in seven days by crack steamers. The White Star Company, always less conservative than their rivals, was the first company to introduce self-acting water-tight doors, separate chairs instead of settees or benches in the dining-rooms, electric bells, gas lighting, and many improvements in the passenger accommodation.

The famous French Compagnie Générale Transatlantique, which we call the French Line for short, started in 1862 with *La Normandie* (a Scotch-built steamer) and three others. Sailing from Le Havre to New York, the company has continued slowly to increase its fleet until it has now some of the finest ships crossing the Atlantic. All good Frenchmen cross on its steamers, and those foreigners who like French food and French customs would find it an interesting experience to make the passage on one of the company's ships.

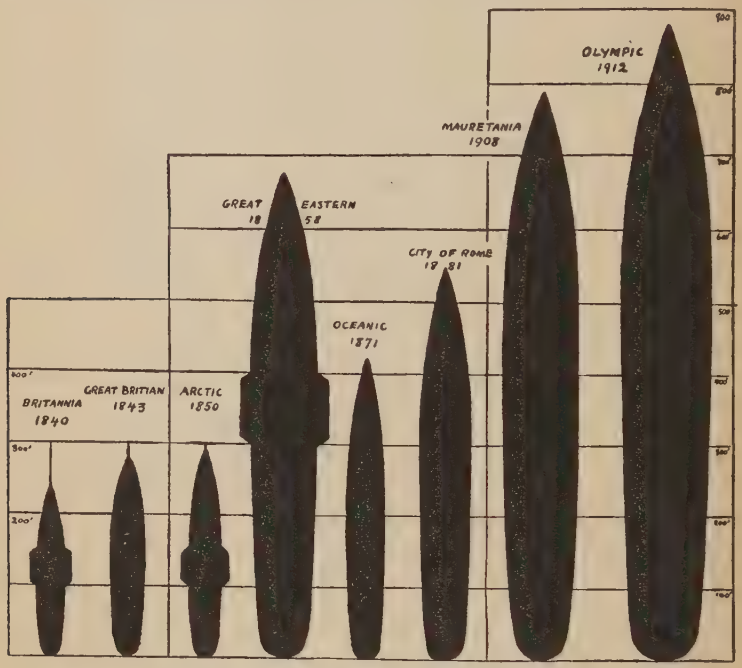
The Hamburg-America Line started in 1847 with sailing ships from Hamburg to New York, and gradually went in for steam to keep up with their rivals. Like the French, they got their first vessels from British shipyards.

The Norddeutscher Lloyd Line, founded in 1856, runs steamers between Bremen and America; and its ships were also built on the Clyde. The ubiquity of British-built steam vessels is astonishing. On Lake Titicaca in the Andes is at least one British-built steamer, transported there and set up on the lakeside by English engineers and native labour. A year or two ago the writer while in a steamer on Lake Lucerne noticed a brass plate in the engine-room with the inscription:

JOHN THORNYCROFT
SOUTHAMPTON, ENGLAND
1908

But this is not the Atlantic.

The competition for the blue ribbon of the Atlantic has played a prominent part in Atlantic ferry history. As soon as the new-fangled steamboat began a regular schedule of crossings owners very naturally tried to go one better than their rivals in the matter of speed. To the fastest steamers went the privilege of carrying the mails, a privilege



that had, of course, considerable advertising value. From the wheezy, creaking old paddle-steamers racing across the Atlantic are descended the ocean greyhounds of the present day. The first steamers actually to race across the Western Ocean were the *Sirius* and the *Great Western*. The latter left Bristol on April 7, 1838, for New York three days after her rival had steamed out of Liverpool for the same destination. The *Great Western* made the passage in fifteen days, which was two days less than the time taken

by the *Sirius*. The excitement in New York when it was known that the steamers were racing across was intense, and day after day crowds of people waited on the Battery to sight the first steamer. The *Sirius* would have arrived several hours earlier but for a mishap in running aground off Sandy Hook, where she stuck until she could float off on the high tide. Ever since that historic race the rivalry between the different steamship companies has been kept alive by the unappeasable demand for speed and comfort, but especially speed. The first holder of the blue ribbon

THE "OCEANIC"

was the Cunard Line, but it has had it taken away from it in the past when for a brief period some star liner of another company has flashed across the Atlantic firmament, but only in turn to be eclipsed by a still faster greyhound.[1] Where will it end, this race for speed? Possibly in some form of Gargantuan hydroplane that will rush at 100 miles an hour across the fifty-foot waves of the Atlantic as a stone skims over the wavelets of a pond. The *Lusitania* brought the time down to 4 days, 11 hours, and 42 minutes, going west; and when the Germans torpedoed her in 1915 they not only had the morbid satisfaction of depriving the enemy of a valuable ship, but revenged the defeat of their own Hamburg-America liner *Deutschland*, whose speed record had been beaten by the *Lusitania*.

[1] The *Mauretania's* record was beaten in 1929 by the Norddeutscher Lloyd steamer *Bremen*.

One of the most famous steamers in the race for the blue ribbon of the Atlantic was the White Star Liner *Oceanic* (the first *Oceanic*) built in 1871. She registered 3707 tons, had the lines of a yacht, and was just as fast as she looked. She brought the passage down from ten to eight days. This ship stirred every rival company to emulation, and a ding-dong battle ensued. The Cunard Line, which had long been behind in the speed race, took up the gauntlet and produced the *Servia*, which brought the passage below seven days. Then the Inman liner

City of Rome reduced the record a little more—a matter of hours. This, in turn, was beaten by other steamers, each nibbling an hour or so off the time, until the *Mauretania* and *Lusitania* brought the record to a figure that remained fixed for years.[1]

These two vessels endeared themselves to the English people, not merely for their speed, but for their impressive lines and seagoing qualities. They were the first large Atlantic steamers to prove the superiority of the turbine over the reciprocating engine, for though turbines had already been tried, notably in the Allan liner *Victorian* and another Cunarder, the magnificent achievements of the

[1] When speaking of the Atlantic blue ribbon record the times quoted refer, of course, to the passage from land to land, and not from Liverpool to New York. To the 'net' time must be added some hours for the time between Sandy Hook Light to New York, and between the Old Head of Kinsale, Ireland, to the Liverpool landing-stage.

Lusitania and *Mauretania* brought the turbine into its own. The *Mauretania* has four propellers driving the ship forward by means of four turbines, with two more turbines reserved solely for going astern. Turbines, unlike reciprocating engines, are not reversible. Like the *Lusitania*, the *Mauretania* was originally built with coal furnaces to heat the water in her twenty-five boilers, but in recent years the ship has been converted to an oil-burner, thus doing away with the familiar dirty stokehold and its army of grimy stokers.

Since the British Government heavily subsidized the construction of the *Lusitania* and *Mauretania* on the condition that they passed certain speed tests and complied with certain requirements concerning their convertibility into auxiliary cruisers in time of war, these tests were watched with great anxiety on the part of their builders and great thoroughness on the part of the representatives of the Government. Both ships had to pass a forty-eight hours' test at full speed at sea with their draught load. The course laid out was from a point on the Wigtownshire coast to Land's End, and a double round trip had to be made. Both ships carried out the tests at a speed over the figure required, the *Mauretania* doing a speed of over thirty-one land miles an hour on the second run northward, with an average of nearly thirty miles an hour for the forty-eight hours.

As I have said, the Cunard Line were the first holders of the Atlantic blue ribbon. With a Government subsidy for carrying the mails the company prospered from the first, and its success soon brought rivals on the Atlantic. This success of the British firm aroused the national pride of a group of Americans to send out fast steamers under the American flag. The result was the forming of the unlucky Collins Line. This company immediately had built four fine ships, the *Baltic*, *Pacific*, *Arctic*, and *Atlantic*,

the United States Government aiding them with a yearly grant of £178,750. This was in 1850. At first the new company was a serious rival to the Cunarders, its ships were faster and its fares cheaper. But the English firm stuck to its conservative principles, and, as in the fable of the hare and the tortoise, its more moderate policy in the end justified itself.

For the first four years of its existence the Collins Line certainly triumphed over its older rival, and then, in 1854, happened the first of the two disasters which were destined to be the cause of the company's failure a few years later.

On September 21, 1854, the *Arctic* left Liverpool for New York with 233 passengers and a crew of 135, besides a large and valuable cargo. On the 27th, when in a heavy fog some sixty miles south-east of Cape Race, Newfoundland, she collided with the *Vesta*, a French steamer. The latter was not badly damaged, and presently limped into St John's; but the *Arctic*, which was at first thought to be only slightly damaged, soon began to sink rapidly. She was holed in several places below the water-line, and the ship was headed with all speed for Cape Race; but within four hours the water had put out the furnace fires, and the crew and passengers attempted to launch the boats. There was a high sea running at the time, and many of the boats were smashed against the *Arctic's* sides when launching, a common cause of failure at such times. The seas were so high that only two of the lifeboats, with forty-five survivors out of a total company of 368, ever reached land.

Over seventy men and four women floated away on a roughly made raft, but the seas gradually swept them off until only one person—a man—was left, and he, after enduring constant drenchings for thirty-six hours, was picked up by a passing ship. Among those lost were the wife, son, and daughter of Mr E. K. Collins, the founder of the line.

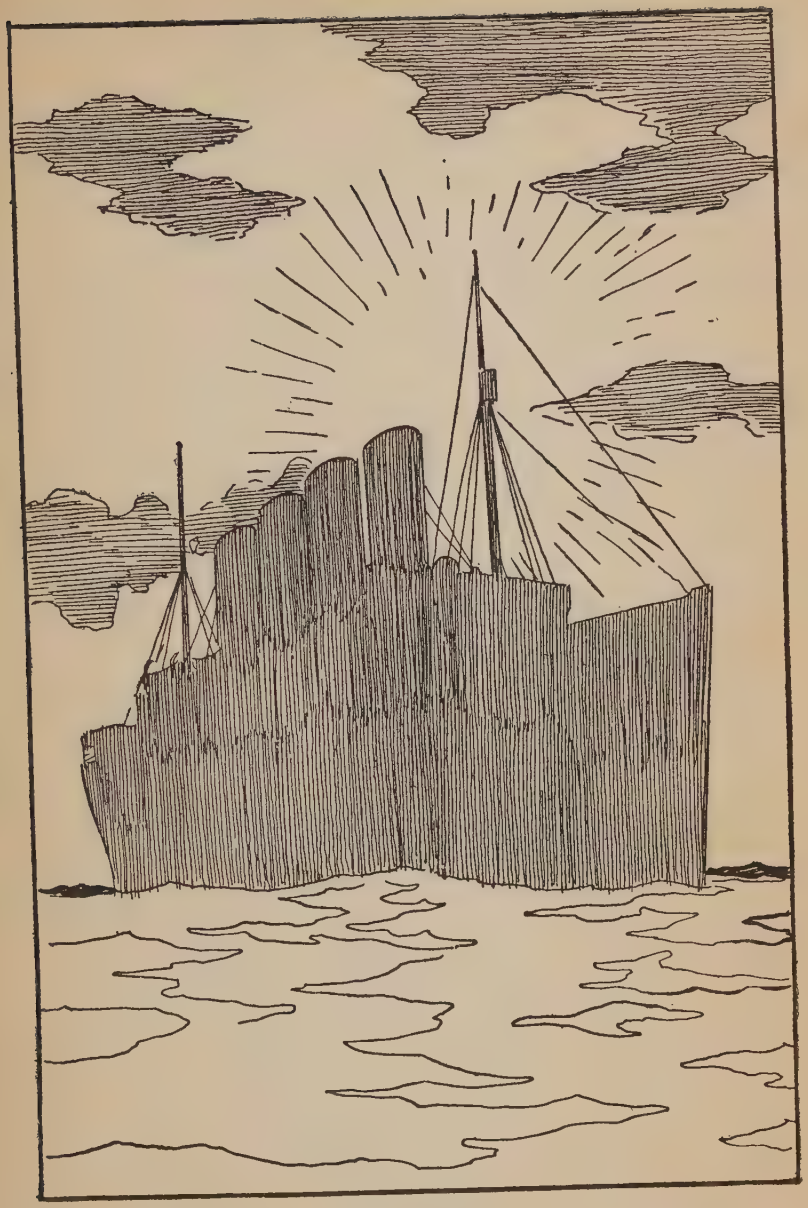
Then, a year and a half later, in January 1856, came the second disaster, the mysterious disappearance of the *Pacific* somewhere on the Atlantic, after leaving Liverpool with forty-five passengers and a crew of 141. She had the mails and a valuable freight, and was insured for £200,000. After she left Liverpool she was never seen or heard from again. The Atlantic had swallowed her up so completely that not a stick or a stave, or any of her people, were ever seen after. The loss of these two fine vessels was a great blow to the Collins Line, and when later the United States Government withdrew their financial support the company was wound up. The Cunard Line's most serious rival had no longer to be reckoned with.

The leading British company spared no expense to make her steamers as safe as possible, and the workmanship and materials were always of the best. The cost of building a liner, even fifty years ago, was enormous. The twin propellers of the *Umbria* and the *Etruria* cost about £5000 each—that is, nearly £20,000 for the four screws. As steel or iron propellers corrode quickly in the sea-water, the blades are of manganese bronze, which in the eighties cost £120 a ton. As discovery progressed the expense of fitting out a liner multiplied enormously. Among the innovations on the Atlantic packets of the seventies and eighties were steam steering-gear, electric light, forced draught, and refrigerator machinery, not to speak of great improvements in the passengers' quarters. Compare the accommodation for first-class passengers on the *Aquitania*

with the first-cabin quarters on the *Britannia* steam-packet, in which Dickens crossed in 1842. The state-room reserved for the distinguished traveller and his wife was such an uninviting place as to evoke satiric comment upon it in *American Notes*, the book in which he described his travels.

On first entering the narrow box that was to be his home for the next two or three weeks the novelist was so shocked at its appearance that he wonders if it was but " a pleasant fiction and cheerful jest of the captain's," and refers to it as a " preposterous box." The two berths were narrow shelves covered with a thin mattress and a flat quilt, and so narrow was the space between berth and opposite wall that there was no room for his portmanteau to stand. The next eighteen days, the duration of the passage, were memorable for their discomfort. Seasickness was a much commoner affliction then than now, and the cramped quarters on board the *Britannia* gave no opportunity for the well and hearty to escape from the unpleasant sight of their seasick fellow-travellers. The month was January, the Atlantic was stormy, and Dickens wrote that " every plank and timber creaked, as if the ship were made of wicker-work; and now crackled, like an enormous fire of the driest possible twigs." The *Britannia* shipped some heavy seas, one of which smashed a lifeboat beyond repairing and tore off the covering of a paddle-box, exposing the paddles, which, as they turned, threw a considerable part of the Atlantic on to the steamer's deck. Another dollop burst in a skylight and cascaded into the ladies' cabin, drenching the occupants as they rolled and scrambled about the swimming floor. The red funnel became white with crushed salt, the top-masts were struck (*i.e.*, lowered), and storm canvas was set.

The limited quarters on board these early steam-packets made for an intimacy that must have distressed a sensitive



A CUNARDER

nature. Dickens speaks of the "domestic noises of the ship," referring to the sound of smashing crockery, stewards falling with the motion of the vessel, loose casks and boxes sliding about, and, worst of all, the groans and other sounds coming from seasick passengers beyond the thin partitions of the cabins.

There were not the diversions for the first-cabin passengers then that there are to-day. We are told how the day was spent. Those who were not too seasick went into the cabin late in the morning to lie down on the sofas and wait for lunch. Some read or talked. At one o'clock a bell rang, and food was brought in by the stewardess. Apparently one woman was sufficient to wait at the table. A typical meal consisted of baked potatoes, cold ham, salt beef, and roast apples. The cabin was warmed by a fire in an open grate, and after lunch the passengers gathered round the fire for mutual warmth, or lay down wrapped in their overcoats, there to stay till dinner-time at five o'clock. For dinner more hot potatoes were brought in, also hot meats, including the inevitable pork, to be followed by dessert of uncooked fruit, described as "rather mouldy."

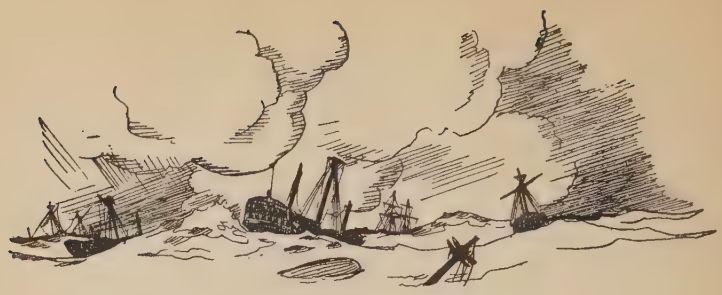
In the evening the doctor was invited down for a rubber of whist, the tricks being put in one's pockets if it was too rough to leave them on the table. Before retiring the captain came into the cabin "in a sou'wester hat tied under his chin, and a pilot coat: making the ground wet where he stands." The captain is described as "tight-built," having a ruddy face and blue eyes, and as being one "who never goes to bed, and is never out of humour."

After a stormy passage the ship ran on to a sandbank as she was approaching Halifax, and some of the passengers shook their fists in the face of the wretched pilot, the sort of thing one would expect on such a vessel at such a date. Imagine passengers shaking their fists at a commander or the pilot of the *Berengaria*! However, the *Britannia* was got off the sandbank without much difficulty, and a few hours later she was being warped alongside the wharf at Halifax.

Compare this voyage with the crossing on one of the floating hotels of these days. One need hardly know one is at sea. Five days from land to land and never out of touch with the world! The daily newspaper to comfort you; swimming baths, racquet-courts, music-rooms, gymnasiums, sun-parlours, libraries, ball-rooms, and restaurants to beguile you. You can (if you have the price) sleep in big four-posters, or in Louis-Quatorze beds in square rooms with gilt furniture and square casement windows. You can descend to your room or ascend to the deck in a lift. You need not eat the ship's food in the grand saloon if you prefer to order your own pet dishes in the restaurant, which is open at all hours. The salt pork and mouldy fruit of Dickens's time have given way to the best food and drink the world can provide.

If he wishes to talk to a friend in a distant cabin the voyager merely goes to his telephone and asks the 'exchange' to give him the number he wants. The modern passenger is pampered to an amazing degree. Even the air he breathes may be warmed for him as it is drawn down into the ship by suction fans. Everything unpleasant is kept from him. The old familiar hot, greasy smell of steamships does not assail the nostrils and stomach of the first-class voyager. The narrow bunk which had to suffice for Charles Dickens no longer insults the well-cared-for body of the modern millionaire. He has a bed fit for a princess,

a private bathroom, and, indeed, a private suite if he wishes it. There are kennels for his pedigree dogs and a nursery for his children. He can make the passage from Southampton to New York without ever once being made to feel that he is at sea, and what more could anyone wish for than that?



CHAPTER IX

Lost Ships

WHEN the line "For those in peril on the sea" was written the words had more significance than they have to-day, for, despite some appalling sea disasters in modern times, an ocean voyage is no longer the adventure it once was. Consider that a thousand vessels cross the Atlantic now to a hundred a century ago, and that one vessel is lost to ten a hundred years ago. A lee-shore has no terror for a modern steamer. No gale can drive her on to the rocks so long as her engines are functioning. Navigation is a more certain business than it was in the days of astrolabes and cross-staffs, and the modern compass and wireless direction-finding have made blunders an unforgivable sin. The steamer track for the Atlantic ferry service is but ten miles wide, and all the great liners pass within sight of each other as they speed between Europe and America on their fortnightly departures. That three-thousand-mile path becomes very familiar to a liner skipper after he has traversed its length a few hundred times. He has not the excuse for running his ship ashore that the old mariners may have had, but there is one remaining element of danger which science has not yet found a way of abolishing. I refer to fog, the worst of all sea perils.

Fog-horns, ships' sirens, are not of much use to warn off other ships, for fog has the uncanny property of deadening sound, and too often the melancholy *hoo-o-o* of the

fog-horn is not heard until it is too late to avoid a collision. Against icebergs there is no protection at all when they are shrouded in fog or darkness except by going dead slow. But the modern demand for speed, more speed, causes liner captains to take risks that they would not have taken in a more leisurely age.

Captain Smith, of the *Titanic*, has been criticized for steaming through an icefield at speed; but he had his orders, and was simply obeying them. The eyes of the world were on the giant ship. She must show her paces: it would not do to have her twenty-four hours late on her maiden voyage. So when the ship entered the area of icebergs she was driven relentlessly on regardless of the peril. The loss of the *Titanic* will probably remain for all time the greatest single disaster that has occurred, or ever will occur, at sea. She was the largest ship afloat and the sister-ship of the *Olympic*, which has survived the submarine peril of the Great War. The *Titanic* left Southampton for New York on April 10, 1912, with 2224 people on board, of whom 885 were the crew. Less than five days later 1513 of those people were dead, and the magnificent and "unsinkable" ship was lying at the bottom of the sea.

She left Southampton on the Wednesday, and on the following Sunday morning ran into a cold area, which indicated the presence of icebergs. On Sunday night at 11.45, when the ship was doing eighteen knots, some of the passengers felt a slight jar, but nothing sufficient to cause a general alarm. At that hour most of the passengers were in their berths, and when the jar was felt many people remained where they were, not thinking that anything serious had happened. Some thought that a piece of wreckage had bumped along the ship's side, others had felt nothing at all.

But what had happened was this. The *Titanic* had

scraped against a spur of an iceberg, which had ripped a long, narrow 'cut' on the bilge, opening the hull of the ship as a fisherman will open the belly of a fish. The wound was a mere slit, but it exposed to the sea not one but several watertight compartments, thus making it impossible to isolate the flood of water in one or two compartments only. It was a clear, starlight night, and the berg had been seen by the look-out, but too late for the rudder to swing the vast hull out of danger. The officers quickly realized the gravity of the situation, but for the sake of avoiding a panic the passengers were not immediately told, though the wireless was busy sending out the distress signal that the *Titanic* was sinking. The news spread over the whole world, and ships within a large radius rushed to the spot. Unfortunately, the nearest ship, the *Californian*, but ten miles away, did not get the wireless message, and this vessel, which might have picked up nearly all the *Titanic's* passengers, continued on her course unaware of what had occurred a few miles away. The wireless operator of the *Californian* was off duty, and though her crew saw the rockets of the *Titanic*, they for some inexplicable reason did not take them for distress signals.

Fortunately, the sea was smooth, or the loss of life would have been even greater. Most of the passengers remained calm when they understood that the ship was sinking, but there were one or two cowardly rushes for the boats by some of the male emigrants from the steerage. While they fought like beasts to save their lives men of finer mettle sat in the lounge or in their state-rooms calmly awaiting the end. They might or might not be saved, but they disdained this saving themselves at the expense of others. Among these courageous spirits were John J. Astor and W. T. Stead. Captain Smith also perished with the ship.

The two wireless operators, true to tradition, stuck to their posts, one being afterward saved. Twenty boats were launched, but, owing to the confusion, they were not all full as they were hurriedly pulled away to avoid being swamped by the expected suction of the sinking ship.

The *Olympic* got the wireless S.O.S. from the *Titanic*, but, being then 550 miles away, could not, of course, arrive in time. The first vessel to arrive was the s.s. *Carpathia*, which had picked up the wireless signals when sixty miles distant. The stricken ship sank at fifteen minutes past two in the morning. As she went down by the head her stern rose high in the air, exposing the four giant propellers and nearly half the keel. When the enormous hull reared up on end to take its final plunge there came over the water to the people in the boats a terrible smashing noise like the collision of twenty trains, and the sound of muffled explosions. This noise was caused by the machinery tearing loose from its bed-plates and crashing down through the bulkheads of the sinking ship. After the taffrail had disappeared the icy sea was alive with struggling people. Those in the distant boats heard the cries of the victims, and then all was silence. At half-past three, an hour and a quarter after the giant liner had disappeared, the *Carpathia* arrived. She had been driven full steam ahead to the spot, but could not reach the *Titanic* before she sank. However, she picked up all the boats and thus rescued the 711 survivors, whom she took to New York. Figures, except to statisticians, are apt to be dull, but I should like to give some figures concerning the number of survivors and the number of dead, for they are an answer to those who say the age of chivalry is past. Seventy-four per cent. of the women were saved, while only 20 per cent. of the men were rescued. Fifty-two per cent. of the children were saved. In the first-class fifty-seven out of 175 and in the second-class fourteen

out of 168 men were picked up. Of the crew only 192 out of 885 survived. Further comment is unnecessary.

In the old days of sail, though no single shipwreck could cause such enormous loss of life as the sinking of the *Titanic*, there were disasters at sea that, because they involved the sinking of whole fleets, were more tragic than anything that has happened in our time. When in 1782, for instance, a hurricane in the West Indies struck a large convoy of over 500 vessels the loss in ships and men was appalling.

In April 1782 Admiral Rodney in a great sea-fight whipped the French fleet under Admiral de Grasse off Dominica in the West Indies. The British took as prizes the huge 110-gun ship *Ville-de-Paris*, the two 74-gun ships *Glorieux* and *Hector*; also the *Ardent*, *Caton*, and *Jason*, each 64-gun ships. The six prizes were repaired, and sailed for England under Admiral Graves, with a convoy of over 100 merchantmen. The *Jason* and *Ardent*, however, were found to be too badly damaged to be able to cross the Atlantic, and were ordered to return to Jamaica. At this point a few of the merchantmen, being bound for New York, left the convoy and stood away to the north, while ninety-three sail bore away for England. It was now September, and as the period of bad weather was approaching the fleet was glad to be at last homeward bound. But soon two more of the French prizes—the *Hector* and the *Caton*—signalled that they could not proceed owing to their damaged state, so the Admiral ordered them to bear away north to the Nova Scotian harbour of Halifax.

After the prizes had gone it came on to blow, and as the glass was dropping ominously Admiral Graves ordered the convoy to sail in close formation and prepare for bad weather. Top-masts were lowered, yards sent down, lower sails reefed, and guns lashed, but none too soon, for the

wind rapidly increased to hurricane force. The Admiral's flagship, the 84-gun *Ramillies*, with 600 men on board, was the first to suffer in the catastrophe that followed. Her main shrouds and stays snapped like bowstrings, and the mainmast crashed overboard with the weight of the wind, and the floating spars, dashing against the side of the ship, tore off so much of the copper sheathing that the hull began to take in water fast. To make matters worse, the rudder came adrift, and the ship became unmanageable. After a terrible night trying to keep his ship afloat, when daylight came the Admiral beheld the scattered remnants of his unfortunate convoy.

Several of the merchantmen had foundered during the night, and shortly after daylight the *Dutton*, an East Indiaman, slowly turned over and sank, while those who watched were helpless to do anything for the doomed crew. The magnificent *Glorieux* was a sorry spectacle with all her masts gone, while near by wallowed two other mastless hulks of what were once proud ships. These two were the *Centaur*[1] and the *Canada*, and of the three dismasted vessels only the *Canada* survived.

When the *Centaur* foundered she took with her nearly 400 men. Thirteen men, including her commander, Captain Inglefield, had put off in a boat. This boat eventually reached Fayal in the Azores after thirteen days at sea, during which one of the party died. Captain Inglefield was tried by Admiralty court martial for abandoning his ship and his men, but he was acquitted.

The great *Ville-de-Paris* was still afloat, though apparently unmanageable. A few hours later she went down, bearing with her 800 men. Of the rest of the ships in sight there was not one that had all of her sticks standing. On the *Ramillies* a bucket brigade was actually bailing out the ship, helping the straining pumps; but it was a forlorn hope.

[1] The story of the *Centaur* is related in *Ships and Sailors*.

No vessel can live that has reached such a stage. The people of the *Ramillies* were fighting nothing more than a delaying action, though the resolute old Admiral would not admit that they were sinking. He took a brighter view than his officers, and even objected to their proposal to heave the guns overboard. He ordered a jury-rig to be set up, hoping to reach one of the islands, where he could effect repairs; but the ship was so full of water she made little response to the scanty sail on her, and at last the Admiral reluctantly consented to letting some of the lighter guns and a quantity of shot be dropped over the side.

Being now lightened, the *Ramillies* floated better, and there were hopes of saving her. The second night came, and as the water was still gaining on the ship more guns were dumped over. But the *Ramillies* was in such distress that it became evident to all that she was sinking, and the Admiral, realizing it himself, allowed the remainder of the ship's guns and both her bower anchors to be sacrificed. So badly was the vessel strained that she was working like an old basket, and leaking like one too. The motion of the sea was twisting her, so that, to keep her from literally falling apart, 'frapping' was resorted to. This is simply the expedient of passing hawsers and chains round the hull, under the keel, and over the decks. Thus the ship is bound up as you would bind together a bundle of sticks. When the thick hempen hawsers were immersed in the sea they shrank, and so tightened their grip on the ship's hull.

The distressful night passed; morning found the *Ramillies* still afloat with the dogged old Admiral hanging on, though

without hope. During the day his officers begged him to save himself by boarding one of the ships standing by, but he refused, saying that to do so would set a bad example to the fleet. He then exhorted the men to stand by the ship for another night, as the gale showed signs of lessening its fury.

These are the dry bones of the story; the reader may imagine the scene. The Admiral is not standing on his quarterdeck in all the splendour of gold braid and dignity.

He sways on the wet and heaving deck, hanging on to the nearest support, while he shouts to make himself heard above the tumult of the crashing seas and the roar of the wind. His ribboned queue, his cocked hat, and his cloak are dripping with the water that soaks seaman and Admiral alike. He shares the common fate, and at such a time becomes altogether human. Discipline is still preserved, but the common danger has brought closer together the officers and men. Admiral Graves by his personal example kept his men together perhaps better than discipline alone could have done. They stood by the ship all through that hellish day and on into the night. At three in the morning it became apparent that she could not swim many hours

longer. She was fast sinking, and the Admiral at last consented to the ship being abandoned at daylight.

In the darkness the boats were got ready, the men working under the greatest difficulties. The sick and wounded were brought up, and the first boats got away at dawn. At six o'clock the rest of the men left the ship, but the Admiral stayed on board until 9.30, still reluctant to leave the floating home that contained all his possessions, his books, his furniture, his stock of choice wine—everything he had, in fact. He went on board the merchantman *Bell*, where he raised his flag. The gale, which had moderated somewhat, now began to blow as fiercely as ever. The Admiral and his crew had left the *Ramillies* just in time. On October 10 the *Bell* arrived in Cork Harbour, where the Admiral transferred his flag to the frigate *Myrmidon*.

Eighteen months before these same waters had been the scene of a similar catastrophe, when twelve British ships were lost. A typical West Indian hurricane, which swept over the islands levelling houses and jungle alike, caught H.M.S. *Phœnix* while making a passage to Port Royal. Just previous to this her commander, Rear-Admiral Sir Hyde Parker, had pursued an American man-of-war, but had abandoned the chase because a sprung main-mast on the *Phœnix* prevented the carrying of enough sail to overtake the enemy. On September 30 the *Phœnix* weighed for Port Royal in a rising wind and sea. As the hurricane season was approaching the order was passed to make everything secure on board. Extra gaskets were put on the sails, rolling tackles on the yards, the boats and guns were newly lashed, and the hatches made secure. The night presaged a hurricane approaching, and by morning a strong gale was blowing. The sea-birds found the wind so strong that many came aboard to perch in the rigging.

HURRICANE

During the day the gale increased; nearly all sail was taken off the ship, and a course was laid between Jamaica and Cuba, care being taken not to get too close to a lee-shore.

Some of the men, never having experienced a hurricane before, were nervous; but the carpenter, a hard-bitten old sea-dog, went about his duties laughing at the gale and by his example inspiring others. At midnight, in darkness so dense that it seemed solid, Sir Hyde Parker, himself lashed to the rigging, gave the order to wear ship. The *Phœnix* was now under bare poles, since no canvas could hold against the pressure of the wind, which was blowing a full hurricane. The sails, which had been whipped out of the gaskets, instantly disappeared to leeward in the blackness. The method of wearing ship was ingenious. Two hundred men were sent into the fore-shrouds, thus forming a sort of fore-and-aft sail of human bodies that was effective, if not perfect.

The *Phœnix* was rolling and plunging so violently that it seemed her sticks must be shaken out of her, while the heavy guns strained at their tackles until it appeared that they must break loose and smash up the interior of the ship. The risk of guns getting adrift was a serious one in the old men-of-war, for once one of those heavy pieces of ordnance broke loose it would roll drunkenly on its four stout wheels about the decks like some fearful juggernaut, smashing everything in its way. All night in between decks the seamen, anxiously watching their cumbersome charges straining at the tackles, were ready to clap on extra lashings or tackles wherever a gun showed signs of slipping its moorings altogether.

Water had begun to enter the ship, and the pumps were rigged and manned, always a serious sign. Meanwhile the intrepid chief gunner was concerning himself more for the wetted and spoiled powder than for the ship. So each man, high or low, was principally concerned with his own

interests, the responsible officers for their reputations, the bos'n for the ship, the gunner for his guns, the men for their lives, and all, let us hope, for their honour.

The doomed vessel continually took green water right over her, which smashed up everything breakable on the deck. The large cutter amidships was crushed like an eggshell by a sea that broke in the waist, and men jumped for their lives to the rigging as each sea came on board. It seemed as if no ship could live through this night, and

when a particularly strong blast laid the vessel on her beam-ends so flat that she stayed there Sir Hyde deemed it time to order the masts to be cut away. But before the command could be carried out a monstrous sea came on board, which not only swept clean the decks, but snapped off the main- and mizen-masts.

The ship could not float much longer, and the bravest men on board calmly resigned themselves to die. It so happened that the *Phœnix* had been driving on a lee-shore, but the intense blackness of the night had hidden the land, which now lay so close aboard that it was only the noise of the hurricane that prevented the sound of the breakers from being heard; though had they been heard, nothing

could have kept the doomed ship off the rocks. With main and mizen gone, and not a stitch of canvas on her fore, the waterlogged vessel was virtually beyond control; and when her keel first scraped over the outer reef there was nothing to do but wait for what seemed the inevitable end. The *Phœnix* had driven on to the rocks stern first, and since she was higher out of the water aft, the entire ship's company gathered on the quarterdeck, where they clung in the darkness waiting for daylight. The ship was pounding so violently that Sir Hyde called for volunteers to go forward and cut away the fore-mast, as he considered this would ease the strain on the pounding vessel. At great risk the volunteers, armed with axes, worked their way forward, and cut away the shrouds and then the mast itself. This they succeeded in doing, but with the loss of five of their number, who were killed when the mast went over.

Before dawn two stout fellows successfully got ashore with a line, and when daylight brought a lessening of the gale's force every man on board was safely hauled ashore. This was made possible because the *Phœnix* had been driven to within a few yards of the shore. When full daylight came the castaways found themselves on a desolate coast which was recognized as part of Cuba, then a hostile land.

A fire was built, and tents brought from the wreck and set up. There was ten feet of water in the hold, thus making it exceedingly difficult to get out the stores, which became for the present the sole interest of every one. Once sufficient provisions and fresh water were got ashore to provide for the immediate future, Lieutenant Archer and four volunteers set out in the cutter, the only boat that had survived the hurricane, for Jamaica to obtain help. It had been damaged, but within two days of going ashore the carpenter had the boat sufficiently patched up to put to sea in it.

Archer set a course for Jamaica, steering all night by the stars and raising the land at daylight. Once ashore he dispatched a note with an account of the loss of the *Phœnix* to the admiral of the station, who commanded H.M.S. *Porcupine* and three smaller vessels to return and pick up the castaways. On the fourth day after Lieutenant Archer's departure the men of the *Phœnix* saw the rescue vessels approaching, and within a few hours all the survivors were safely on board the ships and sailing away from the hostile shore. During the six days they had been there some of the crew had died of wounds, and others who had wandered off into the country had failed to return. The rescued men were taken to Jamaica, and distributed among other ships, Lieutenant Archer being gazetted captain for his exemplary conduct during the hurricane and the subsequent rescue.

In the eighteen-fifties the Royal Mail Steam Packet Line was running wooden-built steamers to the West Indies. One of these, the s.s. *Amazon*, was the largest English wooden steamer of her time, with a length of 300 feet and a tonnage of 2256. She was a fine ship, with a popular skipper in Captain Symons, who had under him a crew of picked men. With mails and cargo and fifty passengers on board the *Amazon* left Southampton for her last voyage on Friday, January 2, 1852. Everything on board appeared as usual, and there was no premonition of the tragedy that was so soon to visit the happy ship until she was off the Bay of Biscay, two days out from Southampton. The first inklings of some impending disaster was when the passengers noticed the rhythmic throbbing of the engines slow down and then stop, allowing the ship to roll in the trough of a heavy sea. They were told that the engines had grown too hot to be safely worked, and the stoppage was to allow them time to cool.

Presently the reassuring sound of the engines was heard again, and the ship resumed her course. But the trouble with the over-heated machinery was more serious than anyone realized, and the cry of fire was heard simultaneously with flames appearing from the engine-room gratings. Heroic efforts were made to subdue the flames, but so rapidly did they gain headway that the stokehold and engine-room became untenable, and the engineers and stokers were forced to come on deck before they were

roasted in the furnace below. So quickly did the flames gain upon the ship that a wall of fire abaft the fore-mast cut off the crew forward from the officers and passengers aft. A violent headwind drove the flames aft, which threatened to roast alive the terrified passengers gathered on the poop. The officers, having the helm at their end of the ship, used their advantage to swing the vessel round and change her course, so that the flames now blew forward, thus sacrificing the minority for the sake of the majority. The wildest panic had spread over the ship, and for a while it appeared as if the people would perish of their own folly without any sane attempts being made to get away in the boats.

There were nine boats, and these were capable of

accommodating the entire company; but when some order was restored another appalling situation confronted the unhappy people. When the engine-room had been abandoned either it was impossible to shut off the steam to stop the engines, or no one had thought of it. So, though the ship was on fire, she was moving through the sea at such a speed as to make the launching of a boat extremely dangerous. It was now impossible even to approach the engine-room to shut off steam, and the blazing ship rushed through the water while her terror-stricken passengers huddled in their nightclothes on the poop as far from the swirling flames as possible.

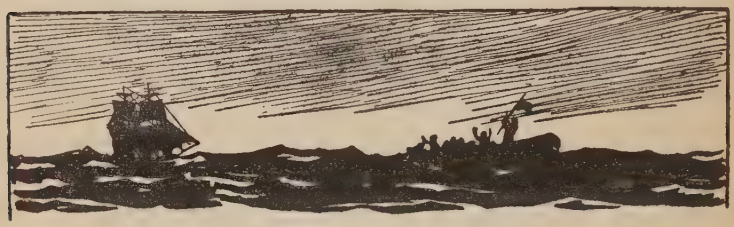
At length the ship became untenable, and the people on her had to choose between the devil and the deep sea. An attempt must be made to launch the boats, some of which were already on fire and had actually to be dragged out of the flames. By now all order had gone, and panic ruled the deck. Bungling hands tipped boats into the water, and madmen fought for places only to find themselves spilled into the sea, where they lived for a few agonizing minutes before their wretched lives were blotted out for ever. But some showed fortitude of the highest order, notably Captain Symons, who, to the very last, was a credit to his cloth. Others, husbands and wives or lovers, stood silently, locked in each other's arms, awaiting the end with the calm resignation of people who have conquered all earthly difficulties. One man and woman were seen to embrace each other and together leap into the flames, rather, it seemed, than endure the hideous sights about them.

Of the nine boats three were got safely afloat and away from the ship. The starboard lifeboat, with sixteen people in her, had been pushed off, when it was hailed by the dinghy, which was almost awash, the five people in her frantically bailing out the water with their boots.

As soon as the larger boat could be brought close enough the five people, one of whom was a midshipman, were transferred to her. The wind had increased to a gale, and the amateur sailors in the lifeboat, feeling the wretched loneliness of the ocean, stood by the burning ship, hoping, perhaps, that a miracle might occur, such as the fire burning itself out. Little chance of this, however, with a wooden ship already a roaring furnace. Like the ill-fated *Kent*, which was lost at sea by fire in February 1825, with considerable loss of life, the *Amazon* burned in the darkness, lighting up the angry sea with the still angrier flames, which, as the people in the boats watched, brought her masts down in a shower of sparks. As the watchers continued to stand by the night air was rent by a great explosion, and the decks of the stricken ship were torn open while burning wreckage and red-hot pieces of machinery were hurled upward to fall hissing into the sea.

To return to the boats, the lifeboat was seen at daylight by the British brig *Marsden*, outward bound, which took on board the twenty-one people and at once stood for Plymouth, where they were landed four days after they had left English shores. The second boat, a pinnace, had on launching spilled all her people except one plucky woman with a baby, who, with her infant, had clung to a thwart until the craft was put on an even keel. Some of those that had been thrown into the water climbed into her, and, with sixteen people, the boat stood away to the east after the *Amazon* had disappeared. They were in the dreaded Bay of Biscay with a heavy gale blowing, and a boat leaking so badly it seemed impossible that she could be kept afloat for long. With a woman's shawl stretched on boat-hooks for a sail, the boat's head was directed toward the French coast. Every one was soaking wet, and had they not been picked up within a few hours, it is certain many, unaccustomed to such rigours, would have perished.

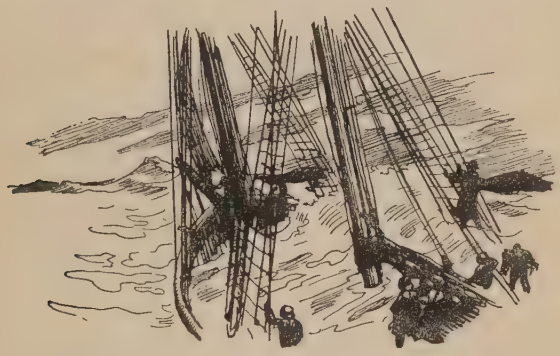
Fortunately, the pinnace was seen by the crew of the Dutch galliot *Gertruida* at six o'clock the following evening, and her people were taken to Brest. Every one on board the galliot kept a sharp look-out for other boats of the *Amazon*, and at daybreak were elated to sight another, this containing eight people, among whom was one of the women passengers, though the boat was a large one with room for at least thirty people. The explanation was made that, through fear of an explosion, those in charge of her dared not stand by too close to the *Amazon* to take in any more people.



The tragedy seemed closed, the survivors were known, and the bereaved relatives and friends resigned themselves to their loss. Then, on January 15, the entire land was thrilled by the news that another Dutch vessel had picked up, on the Atlantic, thirteen more survivors of the *Amazon* and landed them at Plymouth. The tidings were true. The keen eyes of the Dutchmen had sighted the tiny boat some miles away, all but invisible on the heaving waters of the Atlantic. They stood down to the boat, and picked up the survivors, whose unlucky number had not, at least, exacted the toll of their lives. But they had had a desperate time, *sans* oars, *sans* mast, *sans* sail, or they might have reached the French coast some days before. Necessity forced them to invention, so paddles were improvised out of the bottom boards of the boat, which were ripped up for the purpose.

The total of survivors now numbered fifty-eight, but 104 perished with the ship.

On October 24, 1765, a smart little sloop, the *Peggy*, left Fayal, in the Azores, for New York. Her skipper, Captain Harrison, had a crew of seven white men and a negro slave. After five days of fine weather the sloop ran into a gale, which blew with varying intensity for some weeks and drove the *Peggy* hundreds of miles off her course. The little vessel was not provisioned for a long voyage,



so that by December 27, with the ship still far from her destination, all the food had gone, and the crew were reduced to scraping the ship's sides for barnacles. Two tame pigeons and a cat had been eaten, along with the candles from the lamps. The captain was apparently dying, the crew got at the rum-barrel and were constantly drunk, while the battered sloop with her ragged sails steered a drunken course. On December 28 a hurricane left the sloop a complete wreck, and for the next sixteen days the crew kept themselves miraculously alive on the pump leathers and the leather buttons from their jackets. The barnacles had long since been scraped away. On January 13 the men, stupefied by drink and led by the mate, approached the captain with the demand that they

should draw lots to see who should be sacrificed to provide food for the rest. This proposal of cannibalism met with no enthusiasm from the captain; but he was too ill to interfere, and the men proceeded to carry out their ghastly plan. The negro, whether by design or fate we don't know, drew the losing ticket, and was hurriedly shot by one of the others. What followed need not be described; only the head and fingers were thrown away. Three days after the murder the mate died, but the crew dared not eat his body, fearing that if they did so they would become mad.

On January 29 lots were again drawn to see who should die, and a man named Flat picked the fatal number. But Flat was popular among his shipmates, and they felt such compassion for the poor fellow that it was unanimously decided to postpone the unhappy dispatch till the next day. In the meantime a last effort would be made to catch fish by putting out lines. No fish were caught, but the decision saved Flat's life, for the next morning a sail was seen, and the stranger was presently observed to be bearing down to the derelict. The ship was the *Susannah*, of London, and within an hour or two had the survivors of the *Peggy* on board. Poor Flat had become insane, and three of the others died during the passage to London, but Captain Harrison recovered from his experiences.

Here is the tale of one of the most remarkable events that ever happened on the Atlantic. In the month of September 1884 the German sailing-ship *Frederick Scalla*, outward bound from Stettin to New York with a cargo of salt, was dismasted during a strong gale in mid-ocean. She not only was dismasted, but lost also her rudder and boats in the same storm. For many days she rolled helplessly in the trough of the seas, an unmanageable hulk, her crew powerless to control her without masts or rudder.

The incessant rolling presently started some of her timbers, and the crew had to take spells at the pumps. Now a strange thing was discovered: the water was dissolving the salt into brine, and each stroke of the pumps brought up some of the cargo, thus by degrees lightening the ship. The novel discharge of the cargo so lightened the vessel that she kept afloat longer than she could otherwise have done; but after nine days of incessant toil the men were too exhausted to continue pumping. There was four feet of water in the hold, and with the cessation of pumping the ship began to settle lower and lower in the sea. The position was desperate, yet nothing could be done. There were no boats, and neither wood nor means for making a raft. Within a few hours at most the ship would sink under her crew, leaving them to follow her to the bottom.

Here we leave the *Frederick Scalla* sinking in mid-Atlantic while we transfer the scene to the coast of West Africa. Off a certain port in Sierra Leone lay anchored the American brig *F. J. Merryman*, from Boston, at the moment in quarantine. The mate and a seaman had died of some mysterious fever, and the crew were prohibited from landing to bury the bodies, nor were they allowed to drop them overboard. While the ship was anchored off shore others of the crew sickened and died, and some of the less timid of the natives were paid to take the bodies out to sea in their canoes and bury them.

The authorities of the port, hearing of this, would not permit the natives to return to their homes, which left the captain of the brig no choice but to take them on board. The blacks lived forward with the crew, being, of course, fed from the ship's stores. After a month's idleness the brig was given a clean bill of health, a cargo of hides was taken on board, and the natives sent ashore. As the crew were now short-handed one of the blacks was signed on and sailed away with the ship.

When the brig had been a few days at sea fever broke out again. Within a day or two of its appearance the captain and second mate were dead, leaving the brig without navigators. Then one man died of fear, which left but four men living out of the original crew of eighteen. These four, who included the negro, were too weak to work the ship, and, knowing nothing of navigation, had no idea where they were. This was the state of affairs when one morning after a heavy gale the clearing sky disclosed the low-lying hulk of a dismasted ship lurching heavily in the sea two or three miles away.

The derelict was, of course, the *Frederick Scalla*, and this brings us to the morning when we left her sinking and with but a short while to remain afloat. When the Germans saw the little brig appear out of the murk they were overjoyed, until it was seen that the brig herself was in difficulties. Aloft everything was in confusion, and the yards hung at all angles as the little vessel rolled in the seaway. The Germans watched the brig in amazement and despair. Had the devil sent her to tantalize them? They could not work down to her, but she gave no signs of sailing down to take them off, and every minute the derelict was approaching the moment for her final plunge.

All the while the brig was drawing nearer to the water-logged hulk, as if by that same attraction that draws floating sticks together on a pond. An hour passed, and

the brig had approached within hailing distance of the Germans; but the decks were seen to be deserted. Now she remained wallowing and yawing in the sea, getting no nearer to the derelict, behaving as if she was a sentient thing playing some devilish game with the anxious men on the wreck. The situation grew too tense to be endured, and out of sheer wrought-up feelings the German sailors shouted to the deserted brig. As their voices carried over the water two heads, that of a negro and a white man, appeared above the rail. Some of the Germans spoke English and called out to the men on the brig to lower a boat as their ship would not float much longer. The two men now replied, in voices so feeble that they could hardly be heard, that they were ill with fever, and had strength neither to lower a boat nor to brace the yards. While they were talking the sails of the brig filled, and she began to draw away from the derelict, at which the German captain shouted across that they must make an effort to get a boat into the water.

Another man appeared on the brig, and the three emaciated creatures endeavoured to lower a boat. The German sailors watched them with tense anxiety. They seemed to give it up. The boat refused to lift from the chocks, and the three men ceased their feeble hauling on the rope.

"Herr Gott! Pull, pull," shouted the German captain; "we're sinking!"

Again the three men hauled on the rope, and the men on the derelict saw the boat lift and swing outboard. Somehow the boat was got into the water without capsizing, and somehow the three fever-ridden men pulled her across to the wreck. The return journey was more quickly made. Strong hands grasped the oars and strong backs soon rowed the ship's crew over to the brig. A last trip was made to get a boatload of provisions from the

derelict, which sank shortly afterward. On board the brig a fourth man was found, alive but delirious with fever. Captain Hoffschied, of the *Frederick Scalla*, took charge of the brig, and brought her safely to New York.

I leave it to the reader to decide for himself which was the rescuer and which the rescued.

CHAPTER X

Atlantic Mutinies

One starlight night on the Atlantic in the month of January 1886, 700 miles south of the island of St Helena, the full-rigged ship *Frank N. Thayer* was bowling along before a fair wind on her way to New York with a cargo of hemp from Manila. The master, Captain Clarke, who had his wife and child on board, had been asleep in his bunk below for some hours when he was abruptly awakened by what sounded like a scream on deck. As he leaped from his berth to investigate he heard the sound of many voices and the scuffling of feet above. Then came the voice of the second mate calling, "Captain Clarke!" As the skipper flung open the cabin-door the unfortunate second mate, streaming with blood, stumbled into the cabin and fell on the carpet—dead. No thought of mutiny entered the captain's mind as he rushed on deck in his shirt-tails, just as he had risen from his berth. If it was a collision a captain's place was on deck, and this is what he thought had happened. But no sooner had he reached the top of the companionway than he received a stab in the head from some one whom, in spite of the darkness, he recognized as one of the two Indian coolies on board. Before he could be struck again he grappled with the attacker, and in the struggle that followed the pair fell headlong down the companion steps into the cabin, but not before the captain had received several ugly wounds

from the coolie's knife. In the cabin the struggle continued until the captain, growing weak from loss of blood, slipped and fell, lying for the moment too exhausted to rise. This mishap saved him, for the coolie, believing the captain to be dead, now climbed to the deck, where for the time being we will leave him to follow events below.

Meanwhile the captain's wife had come to his aid, and, instead of swooning at the ghastly sight of her injured spouse, she applied herself to dressing his hurts, the worst of them being a gaping wound in his left side, through which part of the lung could be seen. With his wounds roughly bandaged the skipper grasped a revolver handed to him by his wife, and managed to crawl to the companion-way, where he called out to the man at the wheel to shut the door at the top; but this fellow, seeing some one crouching there, dared not carry out the order. While the captain, with the revolver ready, crouched below he heard some one on the other side of the lower door crying out in a whimpering voice for admittance. It was a seaman called Hendricsen, crazed with fear, asking to be hidden; but, as the captain suspected treachery, he refused to let the man in. The cabin resembled a shambles. The place was spattered with blood, and on the floor lay the dead body of the second mate. For the moment the invader had been repulsed, but the skipper and his wife knew nothing of what was happening on deck. That some of the crew had mutinied seemed certain, but whether they had captured the ship or not those below had no means of knowing. It was plain that the two coolies were in it, for as the wounded skipper lay waiting and watching, supported by his wife, he saw the dark heads of the coolie murderers appear at the skylight, one ordering the other in bad Spanish to jump down into the cabin. At this the captain managed to raise his revolver and fire at the precious pair, who quickly withdrew from sight.

Though Captain Clarke, of course, did not know it, this amazing mutiny had been planned and carried out by these two coolies, and no one else. It is well known that many natives of India and Malaya are prone to occasional attacks of madness, called by the Malays *amok* (hence our expression 'running amuk'), and it was thought afterward that this was the possible cause of the mutiny. However that may be, the fact is that two skinny natives managed to intimidate an entire ship's company, and would have succeeded in their bloody intention had they had brains as well as weapons.

The mutiny started when, as the first and second mates were sitting on the booby hatch talking in low voices, the coolies approached, one saying that he felt ill. Before either of the white men could reply they were attacked with knives. The first mate fell mortally stabbed, and the second, as we have seen, was also fatally wounded, but able to stagger to the cabin before he died. The first mate, though dying, crawled forward to the watch, where he was lifted up and carried into the fo'c'sle. Those of the crew who did not come to the assistance of the mate fled terrified in all directions, some below, where they shut themselves in. The long knives of the two maddened coolies had in a few minutes cleared the deck of a crowd of strong men. Those of the crew below soon came to their senses, and realized that the mutineers were but the two puny natives, and while three men stayed with the dying mate the others, eight in number, came out of hiding and went aft, armed with capstan-bars or whatever weapon they could find. On the way they met the coolies, who attacked the sailors with such a frenzy that it was plain that they were mad. In the encounter four seamen were wounded, whereat the others fled, one into the mizen rigging. The coolies, once more in possession of deck, went aft and killed Maloney, an Irishman, who had all

the time stuck faithfully to his post at the wheel. He begged to be spared, but the madmen would not listen and instantly struck him down. The man aloft had to stay on his cold perch all night while the ship sailed herself and the insane Indians prowled the deck below. The shivering sailor on the mizen-royal-yard saw the carpenter murdered and a seaman who had been hiding in the carpenter's shop dragged out, stabbed, and thrown overboard.

The coolies made an effort to kill the captain and his wife by lashing knives to long poles and thrusting them through the skylight, but the captain was able to keep them off by firing his revolver. Once one of the coolies attempted to reach the man aloft on the mizen, but he, using a block as a weapon, succeeded in driving his assailant down to the deck.

All day Sunday the ship sailed on, unmanned but full of men. The one lone sailor aloft was forced to remain in the rigging, the crew kept themselves barricaded below in the fo'c'sle, and the captain and his wife and baby remained prisoners in the cabin. The Chinese cook was the only member of the crew apart from the two coolies who was now on deck. Him they had dragged out from his hiding-place to enjoy a fearful respite while he cooked the mutineers' meals. The terrible hours went by, and night approached—the darkness in which the murderers hoped to make a successful assault on the captain, where they expected to get firearms.

Meantime the captain had somewhat recovered his strength, and, despite his fearful wounds, was able to keep vigilant watch on the skylight above. When the dark came he kept the coolies at bay by firing a shot through the skylight whenever the sounds above made him think that they were near. All the second night, while the lone sailor remained aloft, and the crew were

still prisoners below, the resolute skipper held the enemy off, and when the second morning came the tide of fortune changed to the side of the besieged. Entering the lavatory Captain Clarke discovered the cowering form of the terrified sailor who on the first night had begged to be let into the cabin. He had been hiding there ever since. On questioning him the skipper found out for the first time that the mutiny was confined to the two coolies. Hearing this Captain Clarke took much heart, and at once made a plan for retaking his ship. First he armed the seaman with a revolver and ordered him to keep guard while he, the skipper, should watch the skylight. Fortune had now definitely turned in the cabin's favour, for shortly after this one of the coolies rashly exposed himself long enough to get shot in the chest from the captain's revolver. At this the man ran screaming forward, where he grasped a piece of wood and jumped overboard.

There was only one mutineer left to deal with, and he seemed to lose heart now that his companion had gone over the side, for he jumped down a hatch in between decks, where he remained in hiding. The crew had meanwhile been chopping their way out of the fo'c'sle with an axe which the cook had been able to smuggle to them through the fo'c'sle window, and they presently burst out on deck. Sounberg, the seaman, came down from aloft, and the wounded skipper, his wife, and the sailor appeared from the cabin. While the surviving members of the ship's company gathered on deck the remaining coolie lay hiding somewhere below, a potential source of mischief still to be reckoned with. And there was the ship to man again: the wheel must be taken and the sails trimmed.

But before these duties could be carried out a dreadful discovery was made, and all thoughts turned to this new danger.

Smoke was issuing, at first slowly, but soon in billows, from the hatches. The remaining coolie had set the ship on fire by lighting the inflammable cargo of hemp. Two sailors volunteered to drive him out of his hiding-place, and, armed with revolvers, they descended into the hold, where they fired one shot at the crazed wretch, wounding him slightly. The heat and smoke from the hold were becoming unbearable, and soon both hunters and hunted had retreated from the inferno below, the latter only to dash on deck and leap over the side into the sea. Both of the mutineers were now dead, but there was the other and even greater peril to face, the ship on fire.

It soon became evident that the vessel was doomed. The flames from the blazing hemp attacked the masts and rigging, which were quickly shrouded in clouds of smoke rolling upward from the burning cargo. Preparations were hastily made to abandon ship. Two boats were lowered, but the first capsized, fortunately while still empty. The second boat was safely lowered into the water, and in it were put provisions sufficient to last for two weeks. In this one boat the captain's wife and child, himself, five wounded, and the remainder of the crew somehow stowed themselves and kept afloat without filling their craft with water or capsizing. Being so heavily loaded, it required skilled seamanship to make the nearest land safely. But this was accomplished without mishap, and in the remarkably short time of five days the boat reached Jamestown

Harbour, St Helena. The castaways had kept the boat standing by the ship all day on January 4, hoping that the smoke would attract some distant vessel. But when, on the following day, no vessel had come in sight they left the spot and set a course for the island, some hundred miles to the northward. The *Frank N. Thayer* being an American ship, her crew were taken charge of by the United States consul at Jamestown, and provided with free passages to their respective homes.

There may be bloodless mutinies just as there have been bloodless revolutions, but a mutiny at sea when half-savage men rise against armed authority must in the very nature of things be a desperate and bloody affair. And it is better that the squeamish should pass over the accounts of such happenings. The mutiny on board the British ship *Flowery Land* was no exception to this rule. It is not a story for the ultra-fastidious.

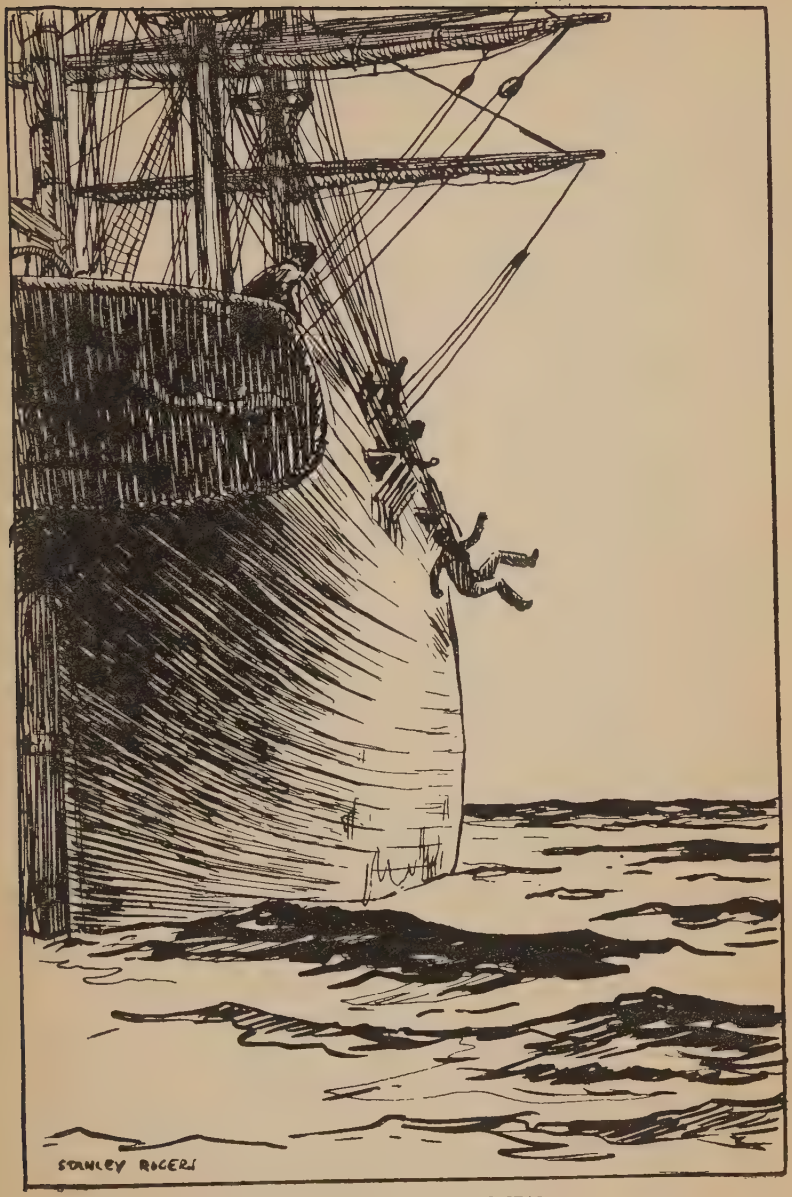
The *Flowery Land* left the London River on July 28, 1863, for Singapore with a mixed cargo. She carried a crew of nineteen, including the captain—Captain John Smith. There was also on board as a passenger the captain's brother, George Smith. The ship carried but two mates, both British, but the rest of the crew were nearly all foreigners and, as it turned out, an insubordinate, surly crowd. They were mostly Spaniards, but included a Turk, a Greek, a Philippino, two Chinese, and a Norwegian, the latter one Andersen, the carpenter. According to the custom of those at sea, the officers corrected negligence of duty with the rope's end, a medicine that, as we shall see, rather aggravated than cured the disease. It seems from the evidence that, while the mates were too strict and brutal in their treatment of the crew, the captain was too amiable and lenient. So while the skipper's excessive humanity weakened his authority, the mates' harsh dis-

cipline fanned the flames of an incipient mutiny. The brooding hatred of one man—a man with the fitting name of Carlos—particularly was aggravated, for this fellow had once been subjected to the humiliation of being tied to the bulwarks for refusal to attend to duty. The attitude of some of the crew had a sinister significance, but seemingly the captain heeded not the warnings of a gathering storm, and continued to propitiate his officers and the men, earning, as it turned out, neither the gratitude nor the respect of either party. When the mutiny broke out the first to go down was the unfortunate captain, who had befriended the very men who killed him.

However, it was not until September 10, when the ship was in latitude 19° south and some 200 miles from the coast of Brazil, that the storm broke. Up till then there had been cases of petty insubordination which on a man-of-war would have been at once suppressed, but which, on this badly governed merchantman, had been growing louder in their threatening.

Then came the tragedy. William Tiffin, the second officer and one of those to survive, went below at midnight when he was relieved by the mate, John Karswell, whose watch was from 12 to 4 A.M. The mate was alone on deck except for the man at the wheel and the watch in the darkness forward. Tiffin, the captain, and his brother were asleep in the cabin below. The mate was first attacked, and his assailants rushed at him with such suddenness that he had not time to defend himself. He fell under a rain of blows from his attackers, who then picked him up and, while still alive and crying for mercy, flung him overboard.

Just as the noise on deck disturbed Captain Clarke, of the *Frank N. Thayer*, so did the noise on the poop of the *Flowery Land* bring up Captain Smith, who was killed on the companion ladder ere he had reached the deck. The



MUTINY ON THE HIGH SEAS

captain's brother was also murdered, and of the afterguard there remained but the second mate, William Tiffin. Apparently his life was spared that the mutineers might have an officer to navigate the ship for them. This officer, knowing himself to be needed, and therefore suffered to live, took heart, and even dared to protest when the murderers were about to heave the captain's body over the side. Tiffin requested to be allowed to give the body a decent sea-burial, and his request was granted. The dead man was sewn up in canvas and dropped overboard only after the last rites had been performed.

Mutinies are usually started and carried through by one or two entirely unscrupulous spirits whose will is strong enough to influence a number of weaker men who in themselves have not the inclination for evil. It was so in the case of the famous *Bounty* mutiny. The followers of Fletcher Christian were not all rogues, and would never have committed the deed to which they were party had not the stronger man influenced them. But here on the *Flowery Land* there were not two, but a number of men whose minds and instincts were alike. By the greatest mischance, Captain Smith had unwittingly signed on a collection of potential murderers, and the amiable captain was the last man in the world to control such fiends. It may be said by those who place faith in kindness to subdue savagery that it was the mates' strong disciplinary measures that caused the trouble, and not the captain's weakness. But if that was so why then did the mutineers kill, with the utmost brutality, the very man who had interceded for them? When Carlos was tied to the rail by the command of the mate it was the captain who had ordered the man to be released. But this availed him nothing when the mutineers decided to slay the officers. It is an amazing thing that among the crew of the *Flowery Land* there were at least seven men ready to commit murder, and murder

by the most fiendish brutality. What henchmen these swarthy Spaniards of the *Flowery Land* would have made for the notorious Benito de Soto or L'Olonnois when those devils wanted a particularly dirty piece of work doing!

After slaying the officers and taking the ship the mutineers looted the cabin, dividing and quarrelling over the dead captain's money and clothing. The cargo was broached, and many cases of champagne were opened, the mutineers all the time keeping the second mate and the loyal members of the crew in a state of terror. As already has been pointed out, the second's life had been spared that he might navigate the ship to land, but when land hove in sight would they kill him, these fiends who strutted about the decks carrying murderous-looking knives? While still at sea a ship was sighted, and Tiffin asked permission to hail her in order to get her longitude. He was allowed to do so, while Carlos stood beside ready to murder him should there be treachery. He was instructed to give false information as to the destination and home port of the ship, and having no choice in the matter, the wretched second mate did so. After comparing longitude the other vessel proceeded on her course, and the *Flowery Land* was alone on the sea once more.

The plan of the mutineers was to sail within easy rowing distance of land, scuttle the ship, go ashore in the boats at night, and tell some story of shipwreck and loss of the captain's boat. At the beginning of October the ship came within sight of land, but, it being then daylight, the mutineers put out to sea until darkness should come, when they could sink the ship and go ashore without being seen. Land now being in sight, the mutineers no longer needed the services of the second mate. They refused to speak to him, and the poor fellow expected to be killed. For some reason or other, perhaps because there is a spark of compassion even in the worst men, Tiffin was allowed

to go ashore with them after they had scuttled the ship. But as if to expiate this momentary weakness, the mutineers rowed away from the sinking ship leaving on board the cook and a Chinese boy, who pleaded to be saved. The poor wretched steward, whose life had been made a hell after the mutiny, was also left to drown, the mutineers pelting him with bottles while he struggled in the sea. The callousness of their treatment of the steward is almost unbelievable. Although he had been wounded in the arm

by a knife-cut wantonly made by Watto, the Turkish seaman, the steward swam strongly and begged to be taken in the boats. But empty champagne bottles and jeers were the only replies he got, until presently he sank, the last victim of the mutineers' lust for killing.

Crime is so often stupidly done. The mutineers made one fatal mistake in taking Tiffin, the second mate, with them. This stupidity, for it was nothing less, was to bring them to the gallows. Under threats they made Tiffin agree to tell the story they had concocted—namely, that they were shipwrecked men from an American vessel which had foundered at sea, that they had been in the boats five days, and that they had become separated from the captain. Promises made under compulsion are no promises at all, and naturally enough the second mate took the first opportunity he could to escape from his dangerous

companions and inform the local authorities. So it came about that the villains of the piece had not long been ashore when they found themselves arrested. In the course of time they were taken to England under strong guard and tried at the Central Criminal Court in the following February. Of the seven prisoners tried five were sentenced to death.

In the days of the slave trade between Africa and the Americas the horrors of the traffic on land were nothing compared with the sufferings of the slaves when they were put on board ship and lived for weeks in vile holes below hatches, treated with less humanity than their masters would offer their animals. A few white men well armed were the masters of hundreds of unarmed and often unclothed negroes, and worked their brutal wills on the slaves while their victims had no chance to retaliate. Yet there are records of revolt on slave ships, though none, so far as I am aware, of any ending successfully for the slaves. For what could these simple blacks do with a ship did they capture it? Knowing nothing of the art of handling or navigating a ship, they would drift until they starved at sea, ran ashore, or very certainly get captured by the first pirate, privateer, or man-of-war that hove in sight.

There is a record of a mutiny on the slaver *Delight*, left by the ship's surgeon, a Mr Boulton, which illustrates the hopelessness of such a revolt. While the slaves did have the morbid satisfaction of killing some of their tormentors, the fury of their first onslaught petered out, and in the end the wretched survivors once more found themselves below hatches.

The *Delight*, sailing in company with the ship *Apollo*, was on the Atlantic with her hold crowded with slaves bound for America, when in the early hours of the morning the blacks broke out and attacked the crew of the ship.

Surgeon Boulton, who was asleep below when the revolt began, had the good fortune to escape to the rigging, but not before he had received a wound from a cutlass as he rushed to awaken the master. But the latter, now aroused, was less fortunate, and even as he rushed on deck, defending himself heroically, he was struck down and murdered. The scenes on deck were sickening. Men were being mutilated and butchered by the frenzied negroes. All their pent-up feelings gave way to an orgy of killing. Meanwhile the surgeon had gained the main-top, where he found two others of the crew hiding. The great platform of the top, common to vessels of that period, provided an adequate shelter for the frightened men. From their lofty position they watched miserably the butchery below. They saw two of the crew crawl out from below and dash for the rigging, and while one quickly sprang out of harm's way they saw the other dragged back and slain. While this was going on the ship was drifting toward her consort, the *Apollo*; the surgeon hailed her, at first without success, but presently to find his shouts had attracted attention. The *Apollo* stood down to the *Delight* at once, but even as she did so the negroes had found fire-arms and were shooting at the men in the main-top. This so terrified one of the men that he descended the rigging, believing that if he surrendered his life would be saved. On the contrary, he was slain and thrown overboard as soon as his feet had reached the deck. A big negro, carrying both cutlass and pistol, now mounted the rigging to attack the men still in the top, but when he got within reach the plucky surgeon struck his head with a bottle to such good effect that he fell backward into the sea.

The *Apollo*, having now approached to within a short distance of the *Delight*, gave her a broadside, hoping that this would frighten the savages into surrender. But they had no intention of doing so, and held off the *Apollo* for several hours, until a cask of powder exploded and started a fire on the *Delight*. The negroes had with great courage defied the guns of the *Apollo* with nothing more powerful than muskets, but at the sight of smoke and flame from the burning ship all their courage and senses seem to have fled, for they surrendered to the men of the *Apollo* and allowed themselves to be herded below while some of their captors set about putting out the flames. The slaves had lived their glorious hour, and the mutiny was over.

Mutiny on the high seas is a crime that has almost gone out of fashion. In these days of sanitary quarters, good food, and humane laws to protect their rights, seamen have not the excuse for mutiny that existed 100 years ago. The two great causes of revolt were bad food and harsh treatment. Neither of these conditions could exist on a modern steamer. As for the windjammers, there are only a handful left, and in their fo'c'sles the state of affairs is luxury compared with the hell-holes of the past. Yet here is a tale of revolt on shipboard which happened as recently as the year 1902.

In November 1902, down in the South Atlantic, the St John's barque *Veronica*,[1] with a cargo of pine for Montevideo, was slowly making her way through the light winds of the Doldrums. The *Veronica* had left Ship Island, in the Gulf of Mexico, in October, and so far no untoward incident had happened on board. The elderly captain was an easy master, and his two officers had had no trouble with the crew. But mischief was brewing forward. It

[1] I am indebted to Mr Frederic William Wallace, the author of *In the Wake of the Wind Ships*, for many of the facts for this story.

seems that one Paddy Doran, whose nationality needs no telling, had beaten in a fight a German member of the crew named Rau—Gustave Rau. This rankled in Rau's heart, and he persuaded two other Germans, Flohr and Monsson, and a Dutchman named Smith, or Smit, to join him in a plot to kill the Irishman. Rau, who was a thorough bad egg, actually talked his sympathizers into believing that Doran was in league with the officers against the Dutchmen[1] on board.

The plotters chose for the time to make their cowardly attack on the Irishman one night when the latter stood look-out forward. Rau, the bully, had given young Flohr a knife, and told him to go and kill Doran, but the youth, having no stomach for such desperate work, pleaded to be let off, saying that as he could not kill a pig he could not kill a man. The men then went toward Doran, and, after accosting him in a friendly manner, struck him on the head with iron belaying-pins. Doran was not at once knocked out and turned on his attackers, but there were too many for him, and he was quickly beaten unconscious and thrown into the paint locker.

The noise attracted the mate, who came forward to demand what the trouble was, but he had no sooner approached within reach of the men than they set upon him, and after smashing him into insensibility threw him overboard. But before doing so they searched his clothes and found a revolver, which Rau secured. The bloody rascal was now armed, and with his accomplices he rushed to the poop to finish the other officers and capture the ship. The helmsman was driven away from the wheel, and the old captain, who came up to investigate, was attacked with a belaying-pin, and then shot at by Rau. The old man, however, managed to get into the chart-room before he collapsed, badly wounded. All this brought the

[1] All Germans and Hollanders are called by sailors Dutchmen.

second mate up from below, and he was at once fired at by Rau, receiving a ball in the stomach. In spite of the desperate nature of his wound, he also was able to get into the chart-room, where he at once shut the door. Rau and his gang now had control of the ship, though they feared to approach the two wounded officers in the chart-room, thinking them armed and not knowing whether they were too badly hurt to offer further resistance. So the mutineers made sure of preventing the two officers from doing harm by barricading the door and skylight of the chart-room, and even nailing boards over the portholes.

They next proceeded to deal with the crew. One sailor, Parsons, was locked in the fo'c'sle; two others, a Hindu and a Swede, were not molested, as they made no resistance to the new state of affairs. The cook locked himself in his quarters and refused to come out until a few shots from Rau's revolver made him change his mind. Rau was for killing the fellow for daring to defy him, but the Dutchman pointed out that he was needed to cook for them. The terrified man was immediately ordered to make some coffee for the others. So, because he held the important office of cook, and men, even murderers, must eat, his life was spared. While they kept their cook the mutineers insisted that he tasted first all food he offered them as a precaution against poison.

And what of Doran, whom we left lying insensible in the paint locker? He had regained consciousness, and as Rau and his men came forward Doran begged for water. With oaths and the remark that he could have all the water he wanted, they savagely dragged him out of the locker and heaved him into the sea.

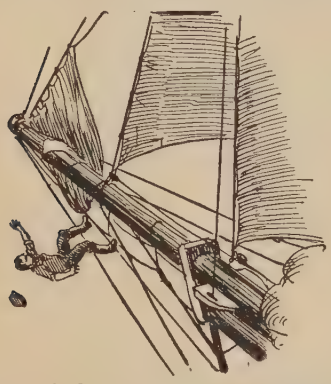
The savagery of Rau almost passes belief. Later, at his trial in England, during the evidence given of his fiendish brutality to his wounded victims, horror piles itself upon horror. The details of what happened on the

Veronica are nauseating for their welter of blood and satanic cruelty. The master and second mate lay badly wounded, but by no means dead, on the floor of the barricaded chart-room, where they had done what they could to bind up their wounds. The second mate had received a single shot in the stomach, and the captain had received three shots, in the neck, shoulder, and groin. As they lay in this desperate state the voice of Rau came to them through the skylight demanding the sextant and the chart. When told that the captain was dying Rau laughed and continued to demand the navigating instruments. The captain cried for water and offered his gold watch for a drink. After some talk, with the advantage all on the side of Rau, a bucket of water was lowered through the skylight when the navigating instruments had been passed up. No food was given to the wounded men, and for three days they lay without any attention beyond what they could do for each other. After three days of the callous indifference the ringleader decided to kill the wretched prisoners.

A most revolting scene followed the appearance on deck of the second mate, who had been ordered out by Rau. The villains were waiting for the unhappy man, who ran toward the opposite side of the deck, where he received a bullet in the shoulder fired by the Dutchman, Smith. Crazed with pain, the second mate jumped overboard, where he was shot at by the mutineers until he sank. Now came the captain's turn. As he refused to come out he was driven out by these monsters, and calmly murdered as he stood in the companion-way with his hands over his face to hide from his own eyes the manner of his slaying. Rau had ordered the young fellow Flohr to shoot the captain, but the youth's spirit failed him, and he begged to be excused this bloody work. Whereupon Rau so threatened Flohr that the latter took the pistol and fired three times at the old man, but missed each shot. With

curses at the youth's clumsiness, Rau snatched the pistol and, putting it close to the captain's head, fired. The body was then heaved over the side.

There now remained, besides Rau, Smith, Monsson, and Flohr, Thomas, the cook, Bravo, the Hindu, Johanssen, the Swede, and the man Parsons. Rau, who had been in the German navy and understood something of navigation, now assumed command of the ship, and conferred with his accomplices as to what they should do next. It was decided to burn the vessel and take to the boats when within easy distance of land, the nearest being the coast of Brazil. But before they abandoned ship it was necessary that they should have a yarn to tell to explain their position. So, just as the mutinous crew of the *Flowery Land* concocted a lying story about the loss of their ship, so did Rau invent a tale of shipwreck to satisfy the people whom they should meet on landing. The men were made to memorize the story, but the Hindu and the Swede, whose lives had been spared, proved to be such bad pupils in memorizing the tale that Rau, realizing they might by their stupidity let the cat out of the bag, decided that these two must die.



The manner of their deaths was no less brutal than the killing of the other victims. Johanssen was shot while out on the jib-boom, where he had been ordered to stow the flying jib. His body fell into the sea. Bravo was shot in the back of the head while hauling in the fore-sheet, which was trailing in the water, and he too tumbled overboard, thus saving his slayers the trouble of heaving him over the side. One more of the crew was killed before

the saturnalia of blood came to an end. The victim was Julius Parsons, the only man who had had the courage to refuse to join in the mutiny. Parsons, as we have seen, was locked in the deckhouse, but, being a fellow of spirit, had tried to get out by squeezing through the small window of his prison. Unhappily the window proved to be too small, and Parsons found himself wedged where he could get neither in nor out. So the poor devil was discovered thus, and Monsson, who was but a youth of eighteen, calmly killed the helpless man with a heavy belaying-pin.

It was just before Christmas when, the ship being within a few days' boat-sail of the Brazilian coast, the four seamen and the cook got into the boat and set out for the land. They first stocked the boat with provisions and instruments, and then fired the ship, which burned readily owing to the cargo of timber.

Rau had taken every precaution against being found out —except one. He had the others rehearse the tale of shipwreck, and threw the instruments and provisions into the sea before they landed. The mutineers even threw their caps away, to give the impression that they had left their ship hurriedly. But Rau, like so many murderers, had made one fatal mistake. The mistake was in allowing the cook to live. This man, who was treated worse than a dog by the others, was the one who eventually brought the mutineers to justice.

So far this tale has been dark and gloomy, but from now on the tide of its events turns, to the satisfaction of all just men. Nemesis was approaching the unholy quartet. At first the men hid in a mangrove swamp near the sea, but when Rau saw the British steamer *Brunswick* anchor near the shore to take on a cargo from lighters, he decided to go aboard and depend on the plausibility of his tale to gain the sympathy of the captain and a passage to England. So the men, led by Rau, went out to the steamer, and her

master, Captain Browne, listened to the yarn spun by Rau, a tale of yellow fever and fire, of taking to the boats and starvation. Though Captain Browne felt there was something wrong about the story, he was sorry for the plight of the men and decided to take them to Liverpool. The men, with the exception of Rau, who claimed he was an officer, were given berths with the steamer's crew, while Rau was berthed aft with one of the apprentices. When ten days out and well across the Atlantic, approaching the

Canary Islands, Captain Browne was awakened from sleep by a gentle knocking on the cabin-door. He opened it to find Thomas, the cook of the *Veronica*, crouching down and trembling with fear. To the captain he told the whole tale, which the former at once wrote in the ship's log after making the cook swear on the Bible to the truth of his story.

Captain Browne did nothing about it while still at sea. Rau had threatened the cook when he suspected treachery, but the captain did not care to arrest the men on the cook's evidence alone. Besides, his own crew, containing a large mixture of foreign seamen, might refuse to carry out his orders. Coupling that with the fact that he had as passengers on board some women and children, he decided to pretend to believe Rau's story and so allay any suspicions

that he might have. But he asked the apprentice with whom Rau berthed to try to find out if the German was armed. When Rau was asleep the boy found out that he had two revolvers, and at once reported this to Captain Browne, who ordered the youth to get possession of them and throw them over the side. The apprentice did this, but when Rau discovered his loss he said nothing about it.

On arrival at Lisbon Captain Browne told all he knew to the British consul, who wisely pointed out that if the men were arrested in Portugal they would have the protection of their own consuls and might, in the end, escape free, as the question of extradition was always an obstacle. He advised Captain Browne to do what he could to keep the *Veronica's* men unsuspecting until he got to England. Meanwhile the Liverpool police were informed by telegraph from the Lisbon consul, and when the *Brunswick* docked the precious rascals were met by stalwart detectives, who soon had them handcuffed and hustled into the waiting prison-van.

The men were tried before Mr Justice Lawrence at Liverpool on May 12 to 15, 1903, and it is interesting to note that the leading counsel for the prosecution was Lord Birkenhead, then Mr F. E. Smith. Like all curs, the mutineers, when they found they were trapped, accused each other, but the youth Flohr turned king's evidence, and the facts agreed in every respect with the cook's story as told to Captain Browne. Flohr, by that strange justice of the law which permits immunity to those who are traitors to their friends, of course escaped punishment. The cook was discharged; Rau, Smith, and Monsson received the death sentence, but the latter was recommended to mercy because of his youth and the fact that he was influenced by the older men. On Rau and Smith the death sentence was carried out.

We have wallowed in the blood of several mutinies of a particularly diabolical order, and it will be a relief to turn to the tale of a remarkable bloodless revolt that took place on the Atlantic in the year 1862.

A high seas mutiny occurs, I suppose, when the officers controlling a ship are dispossessed, and their place taken by force. This incident concerns the retaking of his own ship by a captain who was a prisoner under a prize crew from a man-of-war. It may be stretching a point to call this mutiny, since the captain was within his rights, but the methods he adopted were up to the best standards of a well-planned mutiny—except that in the present case there was no killing.

On November 28, 1861, the 884-ton British ship *Emilie St Pierre* left Calcutta for New Brunswick with 2000 bales of gunny sacks.[1] After a stormy passage of four months she arrived, in March 1862, off Charleston, South Carolina, where she signalled for a pilot. Captain Wilson, her skipper, had instructions to call for orders if the blockade was raised, and, if not, to proceed to St John. While waiting outside the bar the Yankee cruiser *James Adger* approached and conducted the *Emilie St Pierre* to Charleston Roads. Her crew were taken off, and a prize crew under Lieutenant Stone were put on board to seize the ship for carrying contraband of war. Wilson vigorously protested, but in vain. He was sent back to his own ship, a prisoner, his cook and steward accompanying him. Captain Wilson was a powerfully-built man of a resolute character, and the position galled him beyond bearing. He resolved to make a desperate attempt to retake the ship. He confided his plan to the Irish cook and the German steward, and they agreed to stand by him.

Three days out from Charleston, as the ship was being taken to a Federal port, Captain Wilson, who was allowed

[1] *Liverpool Mercury*, April 23 and 26, 1862.

freedom on board, and his two accomplices went into the cabin where the master's mate was asleep, and, throwing a cloak over his head, had him bound and gagged before he could shout for help. They took his sword and revolver, and, being now armed, entered the cabin of the one passenger, an American engineer, and bound and gagged him also. Next Wilson calmly walked on deck, and began a discussion with Lieutenant Stone about the ship's position. To prove a point Wilson asked the lieutenant to step below and look at the chart. Stone unsuspectingly went down, and as he bent over the table to examine the chart Wilson threatened him with a weapon, saying, "My ship will never reach Philadelphia." The lieutenant had no choice but to submit to being bound and locked in his cabin.

Again going on deck, Captain Wilson met three of the crew, whom he told to go into the lazarette aft for some rope, saying that it was by Lieutenant Stone's orders. When the men had gone below Wilson slammed the hatch shut, and these three were disposed of. As the rest of the crew came up from below they were threatened with the revolver and sent back again. Next he approached the man at the wheel, threatening to shoot him if he stirred or made a sound. Others of the crew surrendered without resistance and were locked in the deckhouse. In less than an hour the three men took the ship. But it was another matter to bring it safely across the Atlantic. With only two men, neither of them seamen, to help him, Captain Wilson was faced with a problem that he solved in a bold and characteristic way. By offering certain inducement he got four of the Yankee sailors to help him sail the ship,

never, however, for a moment forgetting that they were his prisoners. Lieutenant Stone was well treated, and allowed to have his meals under guard at the captain's table.

In mid-Atlantic the ship ran into bad weather, and the captain had an anxious time of it. The ship was short-handed, but he dare not release all his prisoners, and so had to go aloft himself to reef sail. The *Emilie St Pierre* arrived in the Mersey on Monday, April 21, one month after her capture, and when the news spread abroad it caused an enormous sensation in Liverpool. Even the New York papers in telling this story which was against their own nation referred to it as "a most gallant and remarkable enterprise."

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